

All About Explorers

Lesson Objective & Summary

Objective: Students will investigate the lives and the impact of different explorers around the world. Students will research an explorer of their choice to understand where the explorer went and what type of impact he/she made (locally and/or globally). Students will synthesize information to create a “Timeline Tile,” and the class will sequence the timeline in chronological order.

Summary: Students will identify some of the explorers with which they are familiar. Students will watch [In the Footsteps of Dr. Livingstone](#), [The Road to Machu Picchu](#), and [Mexico in World History](#). Students will choose an explorer to research further, focusing on guiding questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?). Students will create a Timeline Tile that answers these questions. The class will then work together to create a “Timeline of Exploration,” and share the trends they notice (written or orally).

Grade Level:
Upper Elementary

DURATION:
2 Lessons + Research

SUBJECTS:
English Language Arts,
Social Studies, Geography,
World History

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Standards & Benchmarks

From the Common Core Standards for Language Arts, Grades 3-5

- Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources: summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work
(*Common Core Standards for Language Arts, Grades 3-5, Research to Build and Present Knowledge*)

From the New York State Standards for Social Studies & Geography

- Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.

Background Information for Educators

Humankind is prone to curiosity, and this curiosity has spawned exploration for millennia. There have been many seasons of exploration throughout history, including the Phoenician (Egyptian) sailors’ ventures around coastal Africa (c. 600 BCE), Zhang Qian’s westward journey from China across continental Asia (which ultimately connected the Far East to the west through the Silk Road trade route in 100 BCE), and the Vikings conquest of the northern Atlantic (c.

800-1300 CE). However, the Age of Exploration (c. 1400-1600 CE) is perhaps the most noteworthy era of European exploration, during which improved maritime technology and growing trade interests fueled the desire of many nations to extend their territorial claims around the world.

Portugal's Prince Henry, the Navigator, is often credited as being one of the first monarchs who sparked the dawn of the Age of Exploration. Although he never embarked with those he sent, Prince Henry trained and commissioned sailors to explore the western coast of Africa. These voyages brought back various gifts to the Portuguese monarchy, and later, West African captives were brought back, marking the beginnings of the African slave trade.

Soon, monarchs across the European continent wanted to join in the race for glory and riches and gain new territorial domains for their kingdoms. Christopher Columbus is one of the most famous explorers, sent by King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella of Spain to find a shorter trade route to India. His journeys to the West Indies and the "New World" opened the door to Trans-Atlantic exploration and conquest. Other explorers include Ferdinand Magellan, who aimed to be the first to circumnavigate the earth, Vasco da Gama, who sailed from Portugal to India, and Hernan Cortez, whose explorations to Mexico and Central America began a trail of Spanish conquistadors that was often marked with bloodshed and violence.

In 1803, US President Thomas Jefferson sent explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the recently acquired Louisiana Purchase territories. Lewis and Clark encountered more than 50 indigenous tribes along their path, and their detailed logs chronicled hundreds of species' of animals and plants growing in the West. Their journey across the North American continent not only led them to the Pacific Ocean by land, but it also laid the pathway for subsequent pioneers to move westward, away from the burgeoning states of the East.

The Age of Exploration eventually laid the foundations for the Age of Imperialism (19th-20th Centuries), when much of the world was under the dominion of a handful of European nations, namely Great Britain ("The sun never sets on the British Empire"), Spain, France, Portugal, and the Netherlands.

During the early 20th century, exploration motives shifted once again from the prevailing trend of gaining territorial claims to gaining understandings of uncharted territory, such as the Polar Regions (North and South Poles), the deepest parts of the ocean, and, beginning in the aftermath of World War II, space. Even today, explorers continue to learn more about our diverse planet and beyond, making discoveries that continue to impact and influence our understanding of the world around us.

It is important to note the distinction between "exploring," "discovering," and "encountering" a place. Individuals who set out to "explore" a place often met communities who had already been dwelling in that location for generations (i.e.: Columbus's encounter of the Taino people). Explorers often charted their journeys, taking copious notes of their observations of the people and places they met, which led to the dissemination of a wealth of information in the explorers' homelands. "Discoverers," on the other hand, is a term that should only be attributed to those who made discoveries into areas not previously explored or inhabited by mankind. Regardless of terminology, it is clear that exploration and discovery expanded horizons and enabled people around the world to become more interconnected.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of explorers and a brief overview of their significance:

Land/Sea Explorers

Christopher Columbus: (Italian, 1451-1506) Navigator who travelled across the Atlantic and explored the Americas

Alexandra David Neel: (French, 1868-1969) 1st European woman to explore the city of Lhasa, Tibet

Captain James Cook: (British, 1728-1779) explored coasts of Canada and led three explorations to Pacific Ocean

Ferdinand Magellan: (Portuguese, 1480-1521) Discovered route so ships could sail a complete circle around the world

Sir Francis Drake: (British, 1543-1596) 1st Englishman to sail around the world

John Cabot: (Italian, 1450-1499) 1st European to reach shores of North America after Vikings

Lewis and Clark: (American) 1st overland expedition – 1804-06- to the US Pacific Coast and back; helped by Sacajawea, a native interpreter

Zheng He (Chinese, 1319-138) led seven treasure fleet expeditions for the Emperor Zhu Di across the South Pacific, to India, Africa, and the Middle East

Ibn Battuta (Moroccan, 1305 – 1377) Muslim explorer who travelled across the Middle East and China after beginning a hajj (spiritual journey) to Mecca

Underwater Explorers

Jacques Cousteau: (French, 1910-1997) pioneer in underwater research, invented the aqualung

William Beebe: (American, 1877-1962) zoologist and co-inventor of bathysphere

Sylvia Alice Earle: (American, 1935-) research scientist and underwater explorer

Jacques Piccard: (Swiss, 1922-) ocean explorer and scientist who was 1st person to go to the deepest parts of the Pacific Ocean; built bathysphere and invented mesoscaph

Robert Duane Ballard: (American, 1942-) undersea explorer, marine scientist, and US Naval officer oceanographer, discovered wreck of the Titanic

Air Explorers

Galileo Galilei: (Italian, 1564-1642) 1st astronomer to use a telescope

Colonel Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin: (Russian, 1934 - 1968). 1st human in space - cosmonaut

Sally Ride: (American, 1951 - 2012) 1st woman in space

Wilbur and Orville Wright: (American) 1st flight

Neil Armstrong: (American, 1930 - 2012) 1st person to walk on moon

Christa McAuliffe: (American, 1948 -1986) 1st civilian chosen to go to space

Roberta Lynn Bondar: (1945-) 1st Canadian woman to go into space

Edward Higgins White II: (American, 1930 -1967) -1st American to walk in space; also the first person to use jet propulsion to maneuver himself in space while on a spacewalk.

Guiding Questions	Key Vocabulary
<p>What is an “explorer”?</p> <p>What impact did/do explorers have on the local area they explored and on the global community?</p> <p>What is the difference between “exploration” and “discovery”? Why is understanding this difference important?</p> <p>Who were some of the explorers that impacted our world? How did they impact our world?</p> <p>Are there still explorers today? Why or why not?</p>	<p>Impact</p> <p>Influence</p> <p>Exploration</p> <p>Discovery</p> <p>Interact</p> <p>Encounter</p> <p>Colonize</p> <p>Missionary</p>

Lesson Plan

1. Write the word “explorer” on a chalkboard. In a 2-minute “brain blitz,” have students share as much as they know about what an explorer is, including a definition, examples, and even places.
2. Help students come up with a class definition for the word “explorer.” If possible, ask them to determine the difference between “explorer” and “discoverer.”
3. Have students share the names of explorers with whom they are familiar, and what/where each explored. Have students notice that many explorers may have travelled by ship or land; challenge students to think how else people might explore, and where they might go.
4. Watch the episode, [In the Footsteps of Dr. Livingstone](#) and read [“Dr. Livingstone, I Presume.”](#) Have students work in small groups to answer the following questions. You may need to show the episode several times:
 - a. Who was Dr. David Livingstone? (a Scottish missionary who travelled to Africa)
 - b. What impact did he have through his explorations? (He was the first European in parts of the inmost regions of the African continent. His published journals shared information about different African cultures and communities previously not encountered by Europeans. He renamed Mosi Oa-Tunya, the local tribal name for the great waterfall, and called it Victoria Falls, in honor of Queen Victoria).
 - c. Where did Livingstone venture? (throughout the African continent)
 - d. When did Livingstone explore Africa? (Livingstone arrived in Africa in 1841; his inland journeys began in 1852, and he continued exploring much of Africa until his death in 1873)
 - e. Why did Livingstone explore Africa? (Livingstone was a Christian missionary who wanted to share his faith with the people of Africa.)
5. Have students review the second question: What impact did Livingstone make through his explorations? Ask students to consider what the word “impact” means? How do we measure someone’s impact? What are some ways that we “impact” others? In what ways do explorers “impact” other people? How do they impact us?

6. Watch the episode, [The Road to Machu Picchu](#). Have students answer the same “who, what (impact), where, when, how, and why questions as best as possible. If not all questions are answerable, challenge students with how they might be able to find the answers (books, online databases, web search).

Optional Side Activity: Evaluating Resources – In this day and age where “googling” and “ask Siri” tend to be our go-to for finding information, it’s important for students to still be able to evaluate resources to determine whether or not the information given is factual and trustworthy. Ask students to evaluate a variety of sites to determine which ones give trustworthy information, and which ones may be questionable (and why?). For instance, sites like Wikipedia contain articles that are open to public editing, which means that information may not always be completely accurate. Some websites also include biases towards or against a particular topic, so it is important to consider the slant of those presenting the material. Because books and databases often go through thorough editing processes, it is safer to assume that published books will contain factual information, although biases may still be contained therein.

7. Tell students that they will be creating a Timeline Tile (a Sample Timeline Tile and a Timeline Tile Worksheet are provided at end of this document) for an explorer of their choice. Students will need to carefully research answers to the following questions. Students will need to condense their information into the Timeline Tile, selecting the most important information to share.

- **Who** was my explorer (background, biographical information, unique qualities)?
- **What** impact did my explorer make on...exploration? The location he/she visited? The people he/she encountered? His/her home country? The world?
- **Where** did my explorer venture? (look at the geographical path of the explorer)
- **How** did my explorer travel? (By land? Sea? Camel? Foot?)
- **Why** did my explorer travel? (glory, fame, and riches? Religious purposes? To extend land claims or establish new trade routes?)

Teacher Note: On the blank left side of the Timeline Tile, students may choose to include a picture of the explorer, or a map of the explorer’s journey(s).

8. Once students have completed their tiles, have students, in three sentences or less, take turns to briefly explain who their chosen explorer is, where they explored, and what his/her impact was.
9. Once everyone has shared, have students try to line up in chronological order, with the earliest explorer on the left, and the most recent explorer on the right. Have students read out the dates of their explorer’s explorations and have them double check that they have ordered themselves correctly. Students may notice that there are some overlaps between explorer’s dates of exploration.
10. Ask students to share their observations from their learning about explorers, guiding them to consider such thoughts as the type of impact their explorer made (Positive? Negative? Both?), whether or not their explorer was successful in his/her expeditions (and why/why not), and what other factors may have influenced their explorer to explore.

Assessment / Evidence of Understanding

- Student uses a variety of appropriate resources to answer the questions “Who? What (impact)? Where? When? How? Why” for their chosen explorer.
- Student is able to collaborate with peers to chronologically place his/her Timeline Tile among the other explorers represented in class.
- Student participates in class discussion, sharing thoughts and observations and using examples from his/her learning as evidence.

Assessment Rubric	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Timeline Tile	Student researches required information, with guidance, but may limit research to resources to a single source, or to a resource that may not be dependable. Student answers the guiding research questions and is able to synthesize this information onto a Timeline Tile, with guidance. Student may need additional support to determine crucial information to include on his/her timeline. Student works with peers to place his/her Timeline Tile among the other explorers represented. Student participates in class discussion with encouragement, and may need guidance to use evidence from his/her learning to support observations.	Student researches all required information through using a variety of resources. Student accurately answers the guiding research questions using the information researched, and is able to synthesize this information onto a Timeline Tile. Student collaboratively works with peers to place his/her Timeline Tile among the other explorers represented. Student actively participates in class discussion, using evidence from his/her learning to support observations.	Student researches all required information through using a variety of resources, and may take initiative to research their explorer further. Student accurately answers the guiding research questions using the information researched, but may take inquiry beyond the requirements, demonstrating higher level thinking. Student is able to synthesize all information onto a Timeline Tile and creatively represents the chosen explorer. Student collaboratively works with peers to place his/her Timeline Tile among the other explorers represented. Student actively participates in class discussion, using evidence and real-world connections from his/her learning to support

Challenge Questions (Extension Questions)

- How do we measure someone's impact? Is impact always positive? Why or why not?
- How are modern day explorers similar to explorers in the past? How are they different?
- How might the story of an explorer's journeys be different, based on the perspective from which that journey is told (i.e.: from the explorer's perspective vs. the perspective of those he/she encountered)?
- How does bias affect how we learn about something?

Additional Resources

Explorers through the Ages

<http://ageofex.marinersmuseum.org/index.php?page=voyages>

History of Exploration

<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?groupid=2078&HistoryID=ab90>rack=pthc>

Enchanted Learning Explorer's List

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/explorers/>

Famous Explorers

<http://famous-explorers.org/>

Age of Exploration Timeline

http://www.bruceruiz.net/PanamaHistory/age_of_exploration_time_line.htm

Age of Exploration Timeline

http://www.softschools.com/timelines/age_of_exploration_timeline/348/

***** Sample Timeline Tile & Timeline Tile Worksheet follow on next pages *****

Sample Timeline Tile

Explorer's Name: Dr. David Livingstone



Who: Dr. David Livingstone was a Christian missionary from Scotland who came to Africa to share his faith with others. When he died, Livingstone's heart was buried in Africa.

What Impact: Livingstone was the first European to explore most of inland Africa; his published journals shared Africa's cultures with the world. He renamed Victoria Falls.

Where: Livingstone's travelled from Cape Town, South Africa into central Africa, as well as to Luanda (Angola) on the west coast and Mozambique on the east coast, criss-crossing much of the continent.

When: Livingstone arrived in Africa in 1841. He went on several expeditions: Transcontinental (1853-1856); Zambezi (1858-1864), and Zanzibar (1866-1871); he died in 1873.

How: Livingstone mainly travelled by foot or by boat. He travelled lightly and used local resources, interacting with tribal leaders to gain safe passage through different territories.

Why: Livingstone's motto was "Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization." He aimed to spread his Christian faith to every person he met in Africa but also believed in fair trade practices.

Timeline Tile Worksheet

Explorer's Name: _____

Add a picture of your explorer or map of their journey here.

Who:
What Impact:
Where:
When:
How:
Why: