Name: _____

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THE RENAISSANCE
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Europeans Explore the World

At the dawn of the Renaissance, Europeans believed great wealth lay just beyond their grasp. Educated people generally accepted Aristotle's idea that the Earth was round. Traders returned with tantalizing stories of far-off lands. People lived south of the vast Sahara Desert, but Europeans id not know how large Africa was. Most importantly, European traders believed great wealth could be gained through trade with India and other parts of Asia if a practical route could be found.

Prince Henry's Vision

Prince Henry of Portugal is remembered in history as Henry the Navigator, but, ironically, he rarely sailed. Sailors told him that Africa extended far south of Portugal's trading partners in Morocco. No European had ever reached the southernmost point of Africa, but if it could be sailed around, it might provide a route to the wealth of India. Henry devoted the rest of his life to organizing and supporting voyages of exploration.

By the time Henry died in 1460, Portuguese sailors had reached the coast of present-day Sierra Leone, but they still had no idea how much of a journey lay ahead—or whether it was even possible. Henry did not live to see his dream fulfilled, but others carried his vision forward. Twenty-eight years later, Bartolomeu Dias became the first European sailor to round the southern tip of Africa. Dias named the point the Cape of Storms and hoped to continue to India, but his exhausted crew threatened mutiny if he did not return to Portugal.

Vasco da Gama Reaches India

Sensing that a route to India was at hand, King John II of Portugal renamed the southern tip of Africa the Cape of Good Hope. For nine years, shipbuilders and sailors prepared for a much longer voyage. Finally, in 1498, Vasco da Gama fulfilled Henry's dream when his fleet anchored at Calicut on the west coast of India.

Portuguese merchants returned home with cargoes of pepper, cinnamon, cloves, silk, precious stones, and other valuable goods from Asia. As markets buzzed with excitement, these products arrived in Europe. The profits were enormous, convincing many Europeans that the long and dangerous voyage to India was worth the risk. One sailor from the Italian city of Genoa had an even more radical idea for reaching India.

A Bold Plan

Cristoforo Colombo had captained voyages to West Africa and sailed as far north as Iceland, but his dream was to reach Asia by sailing west. He believed the voyage would be much shorter than it actually was. Rejected by his native Genoa and Portugal, Colombo finally convinced Spain's Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand to gamble on his voyage.Ten weeks after leaving Spain, a sailor spotted land. The captain believed he had reached Asia, but he had actually arrived on an island in the Caribbean, likely the Bahamas. He made three more voyages across the Atlantic and died believing he had reached his destination. In reality, his voyages revealed lands previously unknown to Europeans. Today, we know the captain as Christopher Columbus, the English version of his name.

A New World

By 1500, explorers were returning with reports of lands that matched no known map and seemed unlikely to be Asia. In 1501, Amerigo Vespucci sailed along the eastern coast of South America and concluded that he was not in Asia but had found a "New World." Six years later, a German mapmaker named Martin Waldseemüller published a map labeling the new continent not Columbia but America, for the man who realized he was in a new place.

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Fill in the Blanks

European explorers sought a s__a route to the trade with I__d__a and Asia. Prince H__n__y the N__v__g__t__r of P__r__u__al supported v__y__g__s down the coast of A__r__ca, hoping sailors could find a way around the continent. In 1488, B__r__o__o__eu D__as became the first European to round what he called the C__pe of S__o__ms. Ten years later, V_____ da G_____ reached India, opening a profitable trade between P__r__u__al and A_____. Inspired by these successes, Cristoforo C__l__m__o proposed a *w__s__w__rd route to Asia. After P__r__u__al and G__n__a rejected his plan, F__r__i__a__d and I__a__e__la of Spain agreed to support his *v__ya__e. Columbus reached the C__r__b__e__n but believed he had arrived in Asia. His voyages revealed lands previously unknown to Europeans. In 1501, Amerigo V__s__u__ci concluded that these lands were part of a N___ W_____. Six years later, a m__p__a__er named Martin Waldseemüller named the continent America.

Answer in Complete Sentences

1. How did most educated Europeans of the Renaissance know that the Earth was round?

_____

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*2. Why were Europeans interested in trading with India?

_____

_____

_____

*3. Why do you think Genoa and Portugal refused to support Columbus' plan to reach Asia by sailing west?

_____

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*4. Why are North and South America so named?

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*A higher order learning question. Any reasonable answer will be accepted.

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