Vikings & European Explorers
Vasco da Gama

Vasco da Gama was a famous Portuguese **explorer**[1]. Like his contemporary, Christopher Columbus, da Gama wanted to find a route from Europe to Asia. Europe was eager to trade with Asia. It wanted **access**[2] to Asia's riches and valuable goods. Columbus thought the quickest way to Asia would be to sail west. Da Gama decided he would try his luck and sail east. Eventually, he would become the first European to reach India by ship.

Da Gama's remarkable journey of discovery began on July 8, 1497. He set sail from Lisbon, Portugal's capital. He commanded four ships with a crew of about 170 men and some very basic **navigational**[3] instruments. First, he headed south to Africa's southernmost tip called the Cape of Good Hope. Only one man before him had tried this trip. No one at that time knew what was around the corner of Africa. Despite the potential dangers, da Gama pressed on and rounded the Cape of Good Hope by December.

Next, da Gama's **fleet**[4] sailed north along Africa's eastern coast. They stopped at trading centers that are in present-day Mozambique and Kenya. But not everyone welcomed the sudden visit by European strangers. Some of the Arab traders became upset with the Portuguese and made them leave. Da Gama did however get help from some Africans. They arranged for a guide to lead the fleet to India.

Finally, da Gama and his crew headed east. On May 20, 1498, nearly ten months after they left Portugal, they reached India. But, again, things became difficult. India's Hindu ruler felt insulted by da Gama's gifts, which he thought were worthless. Also, some Arab traders had already come to India. They controlled trading there and didn't want the Europeans **meddling**[5] in their

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[1] **explorer** – a person who travels in order to discover what a place is like
[2] **access** – a way to enter
[3] **navigational –** describes something that is used to help find the way to get somewhere
[4] **fleet** – any group of ships sailing together
[5] **meddling** – interfering in someone else's business

business. They threatened the Portuguese and refused to trade with them. Still, da Gama's voyage was a success. Portugal had reached India by sea. Da Gama returned home a hero, but at a huge price. Many of the sailors died of disease during the voyage home. Only half of the crew survived by the time the fleet returned to Portugal in September 1499.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the passage, a *contemporary* is

   a. an enemy.
   b. someone who lived at the same time.
   c. a best friend.
   d. someone lesser than you.

2. When Colombus sailed west which way did de Gama sail?

   a. west
   b. east
   c. northeast
   d. northwest

3. Which event happened just before de Gama headed east to India?

   a. Da Gama's fleet sailed north along the African coast
   b. Da Gama's fleet sailed south to the Cape of Good Hope
   c. Da Gama's fleet sailed back to Portugal
   d. Many of da Gama's sailors died of disease

4. In the second sentence, who does the word "his" refer to?

   a. Vasco da Gama
   b. Chistopher Columbus
   c. A Sailor
   d. The Author

5. The author of this passage probably wants to

   a. Scare readers
   b. Make readers cry
   c. Make readers laugh
   d. Inform readers

6. Imagine you're one of the ship's officers and you have to record where da Gama's fleet is traveling. Make a list in the correct order, using signal words (i.e. first, next, last) to help you. Make sure you include the trip back to Portugal.

_____

_____

_____

7. Why did da Gama sail east to Asia?

_____

_____

_____

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

    Only half of da Gama's crew survived _____ the time the fleet returned to Portugal.

        a. by
        b. as
        c. because
        d. so

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

After ten months, Vasco da Gama and his crew reached India by sailing east around Africa.

When? <u>after ten months</u>

Who? _____

(did) What? _____

How? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word**: explorer: a person who travels in order to discover what a place is like.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

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