

## 3 Minute History Lessons

### Leif Eriksson (975 – 1020)

Five hundred years before Columbus “sailed the ocean blue” another explorer arrived in the New World. Leif Eriksson, a Viking explorer from Greenland, is said to have spent the winter in a place he named “Vinland” around the year 1000. The settlement was located somewhere along the Atlantic coast of North America. There are two theories as to why Eriksson landed in North America. The first is that he became lost on his trip home to Greenland after traveling to meet with the king of Norway. Another story is that he went searching for the continent when he heard about it from a Viking trader who has spotted the land from his boat, but never set foot on it. Eriksson and his followers are believed to have spent the winter in Vinland before returning home to Greenland. They never returned to North America. The next time a European would visit the New World would be in 1492 when Christopher Columbus stumbled upon the Bahamas.

#### Questions

1. The main idea of this paragraph is that...
  - a. Christopher Columbus discovered the New World.
  - b. Many people traveled to the New World before Columbus.
  - c. Leif Eriksson was a Viking explorer who traveled to the New World in the year 1000.
2. The first European to visit the New World was...
  - a. The king of Norway
  - b. Leif Eriksson
  - c. Christopher Columbus
3. How long did Eriksson spend in Vinland?
  - a. Two years
  - b. Several days
  - c. One winter
4. What evidence is there that the Vikings had the technology necessary to travel to the New World?
  - a. Eriksson was able to travel from Greenland to Norway and back.
  - b. The Vikings were excellent fishermen.
  - c. They did not have the technology, the trip is likely a myth.

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### John Cabot (1450 – 1498)

Christopher Columbus wasn't the only explorer who landed in the New World, but believed he had reached Asia. John Cabot, born Giovanni Caboto in Italy, believed that Asia could be reached by a northern sea route much more quickly than by Columbus' southern route. He was able to persuade King Henry VII of England to sponsor his voyage. After 50 days of sailing (about 17 days shorter than Columbus' voyage) Cabot and his 18 men landed somewhere between modern day Maine and Newfoundland. Still believing he had reached Asia, Cabot claimed the land for England and returned home. He set out on a second voyage one year later to find a sea route to Japan. Most historians believe that the ships and 300 men of this trip were lost at sea. However, recent evidence suggests that Cabot did return home to England.

Even though Cabot mistakenly believed that he had landed in Asia, he was the first European to land on mainland North America. His discovery would lead England to become the major power in North America until the American Revolution almost three hundred years later.

#### Questions

1. The main idea of this paragraph is that...
  - a. Venice produced an extraordinary number of explorers.
  - b. Christopher Columbus believed he had sailed to Asia.
  - c. John Cabot was the first European on mainland North America, but he believed he was in Asia.
2. What was Cabot looking for?
  - a. A faster sea route to Asia.
  - b. A new world to explore.
  - c. A place to practice religious freedom.
3. How is John Cabot important to both British and American history?
  - a. He was the first British explorer.
  - b. He coined the term "American".
  - c. He claimed mainland North America for England.

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#### Amerigo Vespucci (1454 – 1512)

The reason we live in the United States of America instead of the United States of Columbia has to do with one man's stubborn refusal to admit a mistake and another man's dedication to recording his accomplishments. Amerigo Vespucci was a contemporary of Christopher Columbus (that means they lived at the same time). In fact, the two men even met. Vespucci helped prepare Columbus' ships for his second and third trips to the New World. Inspired by the explorer, Vespucci decided to see the New World for himself. While on his estimated four trips he explored much of the coast of South America and discovered many new places such as Rio de Janeiro. While on his voyages Vespucci recorded all of his discoveries so that he would be remembered after he died. On one trip Vespucci wrote that this New World he was exploring was not part of Asia, but an entirely new continent. Columbus, on the other hand, stubbornly insisted the New World was part of Asia until his death. In 1507, five years before Vespucci's death, mapmakers in France were creating a new world map including the new continents. It was decided that the southern continent would be called "America" to honor Vespucci's "discovery" of the new continent. Decades later another mapmaker added his name to the northern continent as well. Vespucci, a man preoccupied with being remembered after his death, would have been thrilled to know that, even today, his name synonymous with North and South America. (Synonymous means having the same or similar meanings.)

#### Questions

1. The main idea of this paragraph is that...
  - a. Christopher Columbus discovered the New World.
  - b. Many people traveled to the New World before Columbus.
  - c. North and South America were named after Amerigo Vespucci.
2. What is used as evidence to prove that Columbus was a stubborn man?
  - a. He refused to admit that he didn't land in Asia.
  - b. He wouldn't allow Amerigo Vespucci to travel to the New World.
  - c. He was famous for getting into violent fist fights.
3. Why were North and South America named after Amerigo Vespucci?
  - a. He was the first European to discover the New World.
  - b. He bribed the French mapmakers.
  - c. He was the first to discover that the New World was actually a new continent and not part of Asia.

### Grade 5 Sample Items

1. Which of these regions of the United States has a climate best described as warm and rainy?
- A. Southwest
  - B. Southeast
  - C. Midwest
  - D. Northeast

2. Look at the box below.

totem poles potlatches canoes
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The Native American Indian group most associated with the terms listed in the box above live in the

- A. Arctic
  - B. Southwest
  - C. Northwest
  - D. Eastern Woodlands
3. Describe **TWO** different ways that people can help to reduce the amount of garbage that goes into landfills while helping the environment at the same time.

1.

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2.

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#### 4. The Lost Colony

- 1585 First English people come to Roanoke Island to start a settlement.
- 1585 Unprepared to farm, the colonists face hunger and hardship and return to England.
- 1586 Colonists are sent again to Roanoke. They build a fort and begin to plant crops. Their leader, John White, returns to England for more food and supplies.
- 1590 White is delayed because of a war. When he returns, the colonists and their houses are gone. A carving on a post says CROATOAN, the name of the island south of Roanoke. White isn't able to travel to the island, and the colonists are never found.

Describe ONE way the second group of colonists at Roanoke was better prepared to create a lasting settlement in the Americas than the first group.

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Give ONE explanation of what MOST LIKELY could have happened to the "lost colony."

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5. Read the list below.

**Some Natural Resources of the  
East Coast of North America**

rich soil  
available land  
wildlife  
sea life  
forests  
fresh  
water  
minerals such as iron

Many people from Europe came to North America during the 1600s and 1700s to explore the land and make money. Using information from the chart above and your own knowledge, describe TWO ways people could use the natural resources in North America to make money.

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It was a difficult task to travel to North America and make a profit. Describe TWO challenges people faced when trying to make money in North America.

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