

Lesson Plan: Charting the Unknown

A Creative Journey into the Age of Exploration

Materials Needed:

- White printer or drawing paper (2-3 sheets)
- A shallow dish or baking tray
- A black tea bag and hot water (or strong coffee)
- Pencil, ink pen, and colored pencils or watercolors
- Computer or tablet with internet access
- Optional: A piece of ribbon or twine, a hole punch

I. Learning Objectives (Approx. 5 minutes)

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify the primary motivations behind the European Age of Exploration (often called the "3 G's": Gold, God, and Glory).
- Describe at least two major challenges and two key technological innovations that impacted explorers.
- Create a fictional explorer's journal and a corresponding map that reflects the historical context of the 15th-16th centuries.

II. The Hook: Making History Tangible (Approx. 15 minutes)

Let's prepare our "ancient" paper for your explorer's journal. This will need time to dry while we do the rest of our lesson.

1. Brew a strong cup of black tea using the tea bag and hot water. Let it cool down so it's safe to handle.
2. Gently crumple a sheet of paper into a ball, then carefully flatten it out. This creates creases that will make it look older.
3. Place the crumpled, flattened paper in the shallow dish. Pour the cooled tea over the paper, making sure it's fully soaked. You can also "paint" the tea onto the paper with the tea bag for a more varied look.
4. Carefully remove the wet paper and set it on a flat, protected surface to dry completely. Set another sheet to dry for your map.

III. Guided Exploration: Why and How? (Approx. 20 minutes)

While your paper is drying, let's investigate the world of the explorers.

1. **Discussion - The "Why":** Why would someone risk their life sailing into unknown oceans? Let's discuss the "3 G's":
 - **Gold:** This wasn't just about literal gold coins. It meant wealth of any kind—spices (which were extremely valuable), silk, and other resources to bring back to Europe for trade.
 - **God:** Many Europeans believed it was their duty to spread Christianity to other parts of the world. Missionaries often traveled with the explorers.

- **Glory:** Imagine being the first person from your country to find a new land or a new route to a famous place like India! Kings and queens sponsored these trips for national pride and personal fame. Explorers became heroes.
2. **Video & Discussion - The "How":** Watch a short, engaging video about the Age of Exploration (Example: Search for "Age of Exploration for Kids" on YouTube; National Geographic Kids or similar channels are great resources). As you watch, listen for:
- **Challenges:** What were the dangers? (e.g., terrible storms, getting lost, diseases like scurvy, starvation, fear of the unknown).
 - **Innovations:** What new technology helped them? (e.g., the **Caravel** ship which was faster and more nimble, the **Astrolabe** and **Sextant** for navigation using the stars, and better map-making skills).

IV. Creative Application: Your Explorer's Journal (Approx. 45-60 minutes)

Now you become the explorer! Your tea-stained paper should be dry or mostly dry. It's time to document your historic voyage.

Part 1: Plan Your Journey

First, decide on your explorer's identity:

- **What is your name?** (e.g., Captain Eva, Marco the Brave)
- **Which country are you sailing for?** (e.g., Portugal, Spain, England)
- **What is your main motivation?** Are you seeking gold, glory, or spreading your faith? Maybe a mix?
- **Where are you trying to go?** Are you looking for a new route to Asia, or exploring the "New World"?

Part 2: Create Your Map

On one sheet of your aged paper, draw a map of your voyage. It doesn't have to be geographically perfect! Old maps were part art, part science.

- Draw the coastline of Europe where you started.
- Draw the fictional island or coastline you "discovered." Give it a creative name.
- Include a compass rose to show direction.
- Add illustrations! Early mapmakers drew sea monsters in unknown waters, or pictures of resources found on new lands (like trees for wood or animals for food).
- Use your colored pencils or watercolors to give it an authentic look.

Part 3: Write Your Journal Entry

On the other sheet of aged paper, write a journal entry from a key moment in your voyage. Use an ink pen for a more authentic feel.

- **Date your entry.** (e.g., "October 12th, 1492" or a fictional date).
- **Describe your location.** Are you in the middle of a storm? Have you just spotted land?
- **Incorporate the "Why" and "How":** Mention your quest for spices (Gold), your hope to build a church (God), or your desire to claim the land for your queen (Glory). Mention a challenge you faced (scurvy is weakening the crew) or a technology you used (the astrolabe helped you find your way).
- **Describe what you see.** What do the plants, animals, and land look like? If you met native people, describe the encounter from your explorer's perspective. (*Teacher's Note: This is a great*

point to discuss different perspectives in history).

V. Wrap-Up and Reflection (Approx. 10 minutes)

Present your map and read your journal entry aloud.

Discussion Questions:

- What was the most challenging part of your fictional journey?
- If you were an explorer, which of the "3 G's" would motivate you the most? Why?
- The Age of Exploration connected the world, but it also had very negative consequences for indigenous peoples. How might your journal entry be different if it were written by someone who lived on the land you "discovered"?

Differentiation & Extension

- **For Extra Support:** Provide a sentence-starter template for the journal entry. ("Today, our ship, the _____, finally spotted land. My quest for _____ has led me here...")
- **For an Extra Challenge:** Research the "Columbian Exchange" and add details to your journal about the new plants or animals you found and what you brought with you from Europe. Or, research a non-European explorer like Zheng He of China and create a journal from his perspective.
- **Finishing Touch:** Once your journal and map are complete, you can gently roll them together and tie them with a piece of twine or ribbon to create a historical scroll.