

Ember's Explorer Adventure: Captain Cook's Secret Mission

Materials Needed

- A world map or a large piece of paper to draw one on
- A blue, a red, and a green crayon or marker
- A few sheets of plain paper
- A brown piece of construction paper or a brown paper bag
- Scissors and glue or a stapler
- Pencils, colored pencils, or markers for drawing and writing

Lesson Plan

1. Part 1: The Secret Mission (10 minutes)

Introduction & Hook:

"Today, we're going to become historians and sailors! We're going to learn about a famous explorer named **Captain James Cook**. He was a British explorer who went on three incredible voyages around the world. But his first big voyage, over 250 years ago, had a secret scientific mission!"

Discussion Prompt: "What kind of secret mission do you think a ship captain would have? What might they be looking for?"

Reveal the Mission: "Captain Cook's secret mission was to sail to the island of Tahiti to watch a special event in the sky called the 'Transit of Venus,' where the planet Venus passes in front of the sun. Scientists wanted to use this to measure how big the solar system was! But he also had secret orders to search for a giant, unknown southern continent."

2. Part 2: Mapping the Voyage (15 minutes)

Activity: Tracing the Journey

Spread out your world map. If you're drawing one, just sketch the basic shapes of Europe, Africa, South America, and Australia.

- a. "Let's trace his journey. He started in England. Can you find it on the map?"
- b. Using the **blue marker**, draw the first part of his route from England, down the coast of Africa, and around the tip of South America. This was a long, long trip!
- c. "After his secret mission in Tahiti, he sailed west, looking for that mysterious southern land. He was the first European to explore and map the coastline of New Zealand. Let's draw a circle around New Zealand with the **green marker**."
- d. "Then, he continued sailing west and came to a massive coastline that no European had ever mapped before. With the **red marker**, let's trace the eastern coast of this giant land. He named it New South Wales. What country do we call this today?" (Answer: Australia)

3. Part 3: The Big Question: Who Discovered Australia? (10 minutes)

Guided Discussion:

"Captain Cook mapped the eastern coast of Australia and claimed it for Britain. For a long time, people said he 'discovered' Australia. But does that sound right to you? Can you discover a place where people are already living?"

Key Concept: "The truth is, Australia wasn't empty! **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had been living in Australia for more than 60,000 years.** They had their own cultures, languages, maps, and deep knowledge of the land. They are the first people and traditional custodians of Australia."

Conclusion: "So, while Captain Cook was the first *European* to map that specific coast, he didn't discover an empty land. He was a visitor to a land that was already home to millions of people. It's important to tell the whole story."

4. Part 4: Create Your Explorer's Voyage Log (20 minutes)

Creative Application:

"Every good ship captain keeps a logbook to record what they see and do each day. Now it's your turn to create a page from Captain Cook's voyage log! This will be your record of the journey."

- a. **Make the Book:** Take the plain paper sheets and fold them in half. Fold the brown construction paper (or paper bag piece) in half to be the cover. Staple or glue the pages inside the cover. Write "Captain Ember's Log" on the front.
- b. **Create an Entry:** On one of the pages, imagine you are on Cook's ship, the *HMS Endeavour*, the day you see the coast of Australia for the first time.
- c. **What to include in your log:**
 - **The Date:** Make one up, like "April 29, 1770."
 - **A Drawing:** Draw what you see from the ship. This could be the coastline, strange new trees (like eucalyptus), or an amazing animal you've never seen before (like a kangaroo!).
 - **A Description:** Write a few sentences about your drawing. What did you see? What did you think? What did you name it? For example: "*Today we spotted a vast land with tall, skinny trees. A strange animal hopped on two legs along the shore. The crew is excited and nervous. I shall call this place Kangaroo Bay!*"

5. Part 5: Share and Reflect (5 minutes)

Wrap-Up:

Have Ember present her Voyage Log entry. Ask her to explain her drawing and what she wrote.

Review Questions:

- "What was one of the biggest impacts of Captain Cook's voyages?" (Mapping new places, new scientific knowledge, connecting different parts of the world).
- "Who were the *first* people to discover and live in Australia?" (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples).
- "What was your favorite part of being an explorer today?"