

Weston's Great Voyage: An Explorer's Adventure!

Materials Needed:

- **For the Ships:** 3 small cardboard boxes (like tissue boxes or granola bar boxes), 3 paper towel tubes or craft sticks for masts, white paper for sails, crayons or markers, tape, and child-safe scissors.
- **For the Voyage Map:** A large piece of blue construction paper or a blue plastic tablecloth, a small bowl of sand or brown sugar ("the Old World"), and a green sponge or piece of green paper cut into a simple island shape ("the New World").
- **For the Explorer's Tools:** One empty paper towel tube for a spyglass, a blank notebook or a few sheets of paper folded and stapled together for an "Explorer's Journal," and a pencil or crayons.
- **Optional:** A small fan to create "wind" for the sails, small world figures to be the crew.

Lesson Plan & Activities

1. Learning Objectives (The Goals of Our Adventure!)

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

- Build simple models of the three ships: the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa María.
- Act out the story of sailing across the ocean to find a new place.
- Use an "Explorer's Journal" to draw a picture of what he "discovered."
- Develop fine motor skills through cutting, taping, and drawing.

2. The Spark (5 minutes)

Introduction & Engagement:

Start by sitting with Weston and saying something exciting like, "*Weston, today YOU are going to be a great explorer, just like Christopher Columbus! An explorer is someone who goes on a big adventure to discover new places. But every explorer needs a ship. Actually, Columbus had three! Should we build our own fleet?*"

Show him a simple picture of Columbus's ships online or in a book to give him an idea of what they looked like.

3. Build the Fleet! (15-20 minutes)

Instructional Strategy: Hands-On Creation (Kinesthetic, Visual)

1. Set out the cardboard boxes, paper towel tubes, paper, and art supplies.
2. **Step 1 - The Hull:** Tell Weston that the boxes are the bottom of the ships, called the hull. He can decorate them however he likes.
3. **Step 2 - The Mast:** Help him securely tape a paper towel tube or craft stick upright inside each box. This is the mast!
4. **Step 3 - The Sails:** Let him draw on the white paper to create his sails. A simple red cross was on Columbus's sails, which he might enjoy drawing. Help him cut them out and tape them to the masts.

5. **Name the Ships:** As you finish each one, give it a name: "This one is the **Santa María**, the biggest one! This one is the **Pinta**, and this little one is the **Niña**." Don't worry about perfect accuracy; the goal is creation and play.

Differentiation:

- **For Extra Support:** Pre-cut the sails or have the masts already taped in place. Focus on the decorating part.
- **For an Extra Challenge:** Encourage Weston to name the ships himself or try to write the first letter of each name (N, P, S) on the boats.

4. Sail the Ocean Blue! (10-15 minutes)

Instructional Strategy: Imaginative Play & Storytelling (Creative, Auditory)

1. Lay out your "Voyage Map" (the blue paper or tablecloth). Place the sand ("Old World") on one side and the green sponge ("New World") on the far other side.
2. Place the three finished ships on the sand. Say, *"Okay, Captain Weston! Your ships are ready to leave Spain. Where are you going to sail?"*
3. Encourage him to move the ships across the blue "ocean." You can make wave sounds or use the small fan to gently blow the sails.
4. **Narrate the Adventure:** Ask questions to guide the story. *"Is the wind strong? Do you see any storms? What do your sailors eat on the ship?"*
5. **Land Ho!** When he gets close to the green sponge, shout "Land ho!" Explain that after many weeks at sea, this is what the sailors shouted when they finally saw land. Let him have the ships land and explore the "new world."

Assessment (Formative): Listen to Weston's story and his answers to your questions. Is he grasping the basic concept of a long journey across water to find land? His active participation is the key indicator of success.

5. The Explorer's Tools (10 minutes)

Instructional Strategy: Application & Art (Creative, Fine Motor)

1. **The Spyglass:** Give Weston the empty paper towel tube. Show him how to use it as a spyglass to "see" things far away. Ask, *"What do you see on your new island, Explorer Weston?"*
2. **The Journal:** Open the blank "Explorer's Journal." Explain that explorers always drew pictures and wrote about what they found so they could remember it.
3. **Record the Discovery:** Ask him to draw a picture of the new land he discovered. Maybe it has funny trees, colorful birds, or a new fruit. He can tell you about his drawing, and you can write his words underneath it. This is a great pre-literacy activity!

6. Closing: The Explorer's Report (5 minutes)

Review & Reflection:

Ask Weston to be the great explorer and give his "report." He can use his ships, map, and journal to show you and tell you about his amazing voyage. Celebrate his adventure with a big "Hooray for Explorer Weston!"

Assessment (Summative): The completed boats and the drawing in his Explorer's Journal serve as wonderful artifacts of what he learned and created during the lesson.