

Lesson Plan: Weston's Great Explorer Adventure!

Materials Needed:

- Cardboard egg carton (one section of 3 cups) or 3 small plastic food containers (like applesauce cups)
 - 3 wooden craft sticks or straws for masts
 - Small squares of white paper or fabric for sails
 - Crayons or markers
 - Tape and/or glue
 - A large blue blanket or sheet to be the "ocean"
 - A simple compass (or a drawing of one on a paper plate)
 - A globe or a simple world map
 - A special "explorer snack" (e.g., orange slices, to represent preventing scurvy!)
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1. Learning Objectives

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

- Describe in his own words what an explorer does (e.g., "travels on a boat to find new places").
- Build simple models of the Niña, Pinta, and Santa María.
- Use imaginative play to act out a sea voyage, demonstrating concepts like "sailing," "discovering land," and "navigating."

2. The Explorer's Briefing (5 minutes)

Goal: To spark curiosity and connect to Weston's interest.

- **Activity:** Sit with Weston and look at the globe or world map. Ask engaging questions like, "I hear you think Christopher Columbus is really interesting! What do you know about him?" and "Imagine a long, long time ago, people didn't know what was on the other side of this big blue ocean. Wouldn't it be exciting to be the first one to find out? People who do that are called explorers."
- **Teacher's Role:** Listen to Weston's ideas and build excitement. Introduce the idea that you are both going on an explorer's adventure today, just like Columbus.

3. Building the Fleet (15 minutes)

Goal: To develop fine motor skills and create tangible props for imaginative play.

- **Activity:** Tell Weston, "An explorer can't cross the ocean without his ships! Columbus had three famous ships: the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa María. Let's build our own fleet!"
- Use the egg carton cups or small containers as the hulls of the ships.
- Tape or glue a craft stick/straw inside each cup to be the mast.
- Help Weston decorate the paper sails with crayons (maybe a big red cross) and then poke the mast through the sail.
- As you build, you can talk about the ships: "The Santa María was the biggest, so let's make it the leader of our fleet!"

Differentiation:

- **For Support:** Have the sails pre-cut and holes pre-poked for the masts.
- **For a Challenge:** Encourage Weston to think about what else a ship might need, like an anchor (made from a paperclip) or a flag.

4. Sailing the Ocean Blue (15 minutes)

Goal: To use gross motor skills and creative play to understand the concept of a long journey.

- **Activity:** Spread the large blue blanket on the floor. This is your Atlantic Ocean!
- Place the newly built ships on one side of the "ocean." Show Weston the compass drawing. "Explorers used a compass to help them find their way. The arrow always points North. Columbus sailed West to find a new way to Asia. Which way is west in our room?"
- Let the adventure begin! Weston can push his ships across the blanket. You can make the journey exciting:
 - "Oh no, a big storm is coming!" (Gently shake the blanket to make waves).
 - "The wind has stopped! The sea is calm." (Make the blanket still).
 - "Look for birds! Sailors knew that seeing birds meant land was near!"

5. Land Ho! Discovery and Exploration (10 minutes)

Goal: To apply the concept of "discovery" in a relatable, real-world context.

- **Activity:** Have Weston shout "Land ho!" when his ships reach the other side of the "ocean" (the blanket). The other side of the room is now the "New World."
- Ask, "Explorer Weston, you've discovered a new land! What do you see here? Are there different plants (houseplants)? Strange animals (stuffed animals)? What will you name this new place?"
- This turns the historical event into a personal and creative game of discovery in his own environment.

6. The Explorer's Feast & Debrief (5 minutes)

Goal: To reinforce the learning in a positive way and assess understanding informally.

- **Activity:** Announce that it's time for a celebratory explorer's feast! Share the orange slices and talk about the adventure.
- **Assessment:** While snacking, ask simple, open-ended questions:
 - "What was the most exciting part of our voyage?"
 - "What does a brave explorer do?"
 - "If you could sail anywhere on this globe, where would you go next?"
- Weston's ability to talk about the journey using the key vocabulary (sailing, explorer, discovering) will show what he has learned. You can save his ships for future adventures!