

Set Sail! An Explorer's Logbook from the 1500s

Materials Needed:

- Computer with internet access
- Notebook or journal (physical or digital) for the 'Explorer's Logbook'
- Pens/pencils or word processing software
- Access to reliable online resources (e.g., history websites like Britannica School, National Geographic History, reputable museum sites)
- Optional: Map printouts (world map, specific regions)
- Optional: Art supplies for illustrating the logbook

Lesson Activities:

Part 1: Setting the Scene (Approx. 30 minutes)

Introduction: The World in 1500

Begin by discussing what the world map looked like to Europeans around 1500. Why was there a sudden surge in exploration? Briefly touch upon the '3 Gs' - God (spreading Christianity), Gold (seeking wealth, trade routes), and Glory (national pride, personal fame).

Activity: Choose Your Explorer Persona

Imagine you are preparing for a major voyage in the early 1500s. You could be:

- a) A navigator aboard Ferdinand Magellan's fleet.
- b) A crew member with Vasco da Gama seeking a route to India.
- c) A cartographer accompanying Hernán Cortés.
- d) A lesser-known sailor hoping to make their fortune.

Choose one (or create your own similar persona). Research your chosen explorer/expedition briefly to understand the context of their voyage (where they went, their goals).

Part 2: Building Your Logbook (Approx. 60-90 minutes)

Activity: Create Your Explorer's Logbook

Using your notebook or digital document, create your logbook. This will be your main project for the lesson. Include the following types of entries:

- **Entry 1: Departure Day**
 - Date your entry (e.g., August 10, 1519).
 - Describe your feelings: Excitement? Fear? Why are you undertaking this dangerous journey? What are your personal goals (wealth, fame, faith, duty)?
 - Describe your ship and the supplies. What technology are you relying on (compass, astrolabe, caravel design)? Research these briefly.
- **Entry 2: Life at Sea**
 - Date your entry a few weeks into the voyage.
 - Describe the daily routine. What are the conditions like? (Food, storms, boredom, illness like scurvy).
 - Are there any challenges with navigation? How do you know where you are?
- **Entry 3: First Contact/Discovery**

- Date your entry upon significant landfall or encounter.
- Describe what you see: the land, plants, animals, and people. What are your initial impressions?
- How do you interact with the local inhabitants? Is it peaceful? Tense? How do your motivations (God, Gold, Glory) influence this interaction?

- **Entry 4: Challenges and Costs**

- Date your entry later in the voyage.
- Reflect on the difficulties faced: conflict, disease, loss of ships or crewmates. Was the cost worth it?
- Consider the impact on the places you've visited. What changes are already happening?

Optional Extension: Include maps (hand-drawn or printed/annotated) showing your route, sketches of discoveries (plants, animals, tools), or reflections on specific historical events related to your chosen expedition.

Part 3: Reflection and Impact (Approx. 20-30 minutes)

Activity: Return and Reflection

Write a final logbook entry imagining you have returned to Europe (if your persona survived!).

- What 'treasures' did you bring back (not just gold - think knowledge, maps, goods)?
- How has the voyage changed you?
- What do you think the long-term consequences of voyages like yours will be for Europe and the wider world? (Consider trade, empires, cultural exchange, conflict, disease).

Discussion/Assessment:

Review the logbook together. Discuss the choices made in the entries. Ask questions like:

- What was the most surprising thing you learned?
- How did writing from this perspective change your understanding of the Age of Exploration?
- What are the different ways we can view the impact of these voyages today?