

DBQ: The European Age of Exploration

Historical Context:

Until about 1450, Europe was mostly cut off and isolated from the **Silk Roads**. Without access to the wealth, trade goods, technologies, and ideas that travelled from China, India, the Middle East, and North Africa, Europeans lived in the “**Dark Ages**.” This meant that the European economy was based on agriculture alone (**Manor System**), European politics were decentralized (**Feudalism**), and life was poor and hard for the majority of people. The only cultural unity and comfort provided to Europeans came from the **Catholic Church**, which established common religious laws and gave people hope in salvation.

A few events began to change the direction of European history and eventually allow Europeans to dominate global trade. The first was the **Black Death**, or the Plague, which came to Europe through trade routes in 1348. While at first this caused an obsession with death (**gothic** culture) and was devastating to the European population, in the long-term this disease actually allowed survivors a better standard of living. Wages and salaries rose as survivors had less competition for jobs. The next major turning point was the **Fall of Constantinople** (or the Fall of the Byzantine Empire) in 1453, when the **Ottoman Empire** (Islamic) invaded. While at first this represented a huge defeat for Christianity and blocked off Europe from any access it had to the Silk Roads, in the long-term it would force Europeans to find wealth somewhere else.

Up until 1453 only the city-states of the **Italian Peninsula** had any access to the wealth and trade of the Silk Roads. After 1453 it would be up to innovative and risk-taking adventurers to bring Europe out of the Dark Ages and into a Golden Age (the **Renaissance**). The series of voyages and expeditions made by Europeans to link Europe to the global trade and wealth of the east would be known as **The Age of Exploration**.

Directions: *The following question is based on the accompanying documents in Part A. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and the author’s point of view. Be sure to:*

1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about the topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes, making sure to reference **Historical Context, Audience, Purpose, and Point of View**. Answer the questions, which follow each document.
3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the question.
4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline. Be sure to include Topic Sentences, Outside Evidence, and Corroborating Documents.

DBQ PROMPT: Identify the causes of the European Age of Exploration. Assess the accomplishments of the European Age of Exploration in bringing about a European Golden Age (The Renaissance).

- In the space below, make a chart that outlines the body paragraphs of your DBQ by placing the documents in appropriate groups. Be sure to label each column of your chart and list the documents below the appropriate label. There should be 2-3 body paragraphs.

- Write a thesis statement (1-2 sentences) that responds to the question: "Identify the causes of the European Age of Exploration. Assess the accomplishments of the European Age of Exploration in bringing about a European Golden Age (The Renaissance)." Remember that your thesis statement must do more than re-word the question. It must demonstrate that you have read and understand the documents.

Document 1

Source: Historian John P. McKay describes the impact of the Fall of Constantinople (1453) on Europe and the role it played in causing the Age of Exploration in *A History of Western Society 10th ed.* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011).


By the mid-sixteenth century Ottomans controlled the sea trade in the eastern Mediterranean, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and the rest of North Africa, and their power extended into Europe as far west as Vienna.

Ottoman expansion frightened Europeans. The Ottoman armies seemed nearly invincible and the empire's desire for expansion limitless. In France in the sixteenth century, twice as many books were printed about the Turkish threat as about the American discoveries. The strength of the Ottomans helps explain some of the missionary fervor Christians brought to new territories. It also raised economic concerns. With trade routes to the east in the hands of the Ottomans, Europeans needed to find new trade routes.

Document 2

Source: A map of exploration routes coming from Portugal. Rulers of Portugal began to fund voyages of exploration under the rule of Prince Henry, "The Navigator," a nickname earned for his interest in new navigation technologies he brought to Europe from the Arab world. From *Civilization in the West* published by Pearson Education.



 Portuguese explorers moved gradually down the coast of Africa and ultimately reached western India in their search for gold, spices, and slaves.

Document 3

Source: An excerpt from the journal of Christopher Columbus, an Italian explorer who led voyages funded by the monarchs of Spain in 1492. Columbus sailed west from Spain in order to reach India while avoiding Africa. He died believing his men discovered a westward route to India, but in fact, landed in the Caribbean. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus1.asp>

Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians, and princes who love and promote the holy Christian faith, and are enemies of the doctrine of Mahomet [Mohammed], and of all idolatry and heresy, determined to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the above-mentioned countries of India, to see the said princes, people, and territories, and to learn their disposition and the proper method of converting them to our holy faith; and furthermore directed that I should not proceed by land to the East, as is customary, but by a Westerly route, in which direction we have hitherto no certain evidence that any one has gone. So after having expelled the Jews from your dominions, your Highnesses, in the same month of January, ordered me to proceed with a sufficient armament to the said regions of India, and for that purpose granted me great favors, and ennobled me that thenceforth I might call myself Don, and be High Admiral of the Sea, and perpetual Viceroy and Governor in all the islands and continents which I might discover and acquire, or which may hereafter be discovered and acquired in the ocean.

Document 4

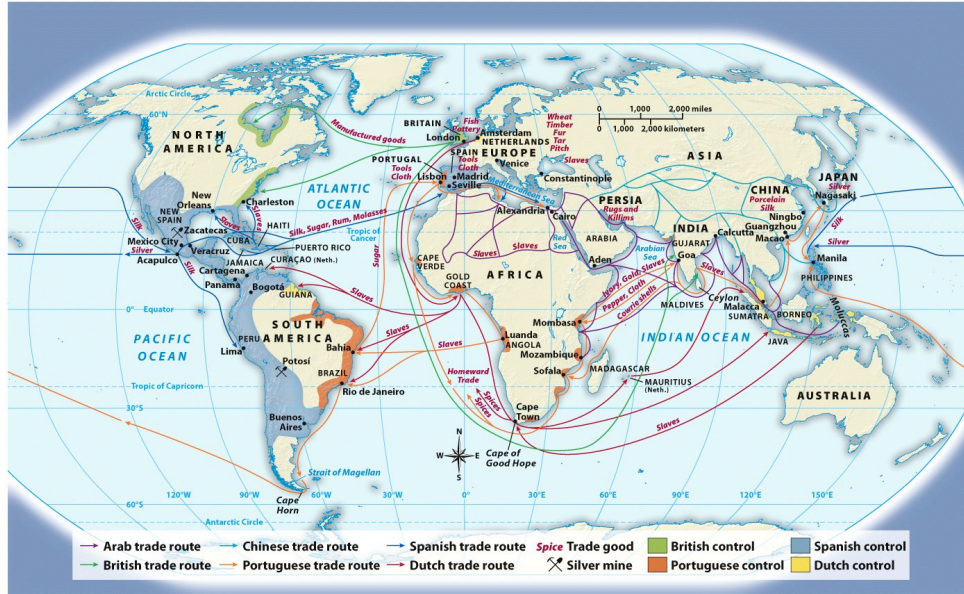
Source: *Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer sent by the Kings of Portugal to find a sea route to India. In 1497 his boats rounded the Cape of Good Hope and reached Calicut (Calcutta), India on May 20, 1498. Excerpt from da Gama's journal from:* <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1497degama.asp>

1498. Calicut. [Arrival.] That night (May 20) we anchored two leagues from the city of Calicut...

On the following day (May 22) these same boats came alongside, when the captain-major sent one of the convicts to Calicut, and those with whom he went took him to two Moors (Muslims) from Tunis, who could speak Castilian and Genoese. The first greeting that he received was in these words: "May the Devil take thee! What brought you hither?" They asked what he sought so far way from home, and he told them that we came in search of Christians and of spices. They said: "Why does not the King of Castile, the King of France, or the Signoria of Venice send thither?" He said that the King of Portugal would not consent to their doing so, and they said he did the right thing. After this conversation they took him to their lodgings and gave him wheaten bread and honey. When he had eaten and returned to the ships, accompanied by one of the Moors, who was no sooner on board, then he said these words: "A lucky venture, a lucky venture! Plenty of rubies, plenty of emeralds! You owe great thanks to God, for having brought you to a country holding such riches!" We were greatly

Document 5

Source: After Columbus's voyage of 1492, rulers throughout Europe began to fund voyages of exploration. Below is a map of the notable voyages of the era and the territories each country acquired. *A History of Western Society 10th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011).*



Document 6

Source: *The Moneylender and His Wife*, by Quentin Matsys, was painted in 1514 in the Netherlands. The Age of Exploration brought new wealth to Europe and gave rise to new institutions, like banks, that would regulate the expanding economy.



Document 7

Source: "England's Treasure by Forraign Trade," written in 1664 by Thomas Mun, an English economist and mercantilist, describes the positive effects the Age of Exploration had on political centralization and power in Europe. The spelling is true to 17th century English. Modern History Sourcebook: <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1664mun-engtrade.asp>

Behold then the true form and worth of forraign trade, which is *The great Revenue of the King, The honour of the Kingdom, The Noble profession of the Merchant, The School of our Arts, The supply of our wants, The employment of our poor, The improvement of our Lands, The Nurcery of our Mariners, The walls of the Kingdoms, The means of our Treasure, The Sinnews of our wars, The terror of our Enemies*. For all which great and weighty reasons, do so many well-governed States highly countenance the profession, and carefully cherish the action, not only with Policy to encrease it, but also with power to protect it from all forraign injuries; because they know it is a Principal in Reason of State to maintain and defend that which doth Support them and their estates.

Document 8

Source: As European countries established colonies around the world, an exchange of trade goods across the Atlantic Ocean came to replace the Silk Roads. The trans-Atlantic trade network was known as the Columbian Exchange, after Christopher Columbus. [venturacollege.edu](http://www.venturacollege.edu).

