



Day 14 Age of Exploration Unit
50 - 65 Minutes

ENGLISH EXPLORATION

ENGLISH EXPLORATION IN THE NEW WORLD – LESSON PLAN (50-65 MINUTES)

Adaptable for Grades 3–9

OBJECTIVE:

Students will understand why England entered the Age of Exploration, identify major English explorers, analyze their goals and achievements, and examine how English voyages shaped global expansion. Students will read the article, view the PowerPoint, and complete a differentiated reading activity.

(Note: The next lesson will focus on English pirates and privateers.) Note that Jamestown and English settlements in America are covered in our 13 colonies unit.

GRADE LEVEL:

Grades 3–9 (Differentiated)

MATERIALS:

- English Exploration article
- PowerPoint presentation
- Reading comprehension choices:
 - Sir Francis Drake
 - Queen Elizabeth I
 - John Cabot
 - Captain James Cook
 - Search for the Northwest Passage
- “Search for the Northwest Passage” interactive map (if teacher chooses to show it briefly)
- Student notebooks or writing sheets

INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

Teacher says: “Today we will learn how England became a major exploring nation during the Age of Exploration. We will explore the journeys of John Cabot, Francis Drake, Henry Hudson, and others who helped England gain influence overseas.”

Note to students:

“We will not cover English pirates today because our next lesson is entirely about pirates and privateers.”

Ask students:

“Why might England want to explore new lands or oceans during the 1500s and 1600s?”

Record answers (wealth, trade, competition with Spain, curiosity, power).

ARTICLE READING (15 MINUTES)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/unit-and-curriculum/english-exploration-in-the-new-world>

First, discuss vocabulary in the reading:

- **Sea Dogs** – English privateers (government-approved pirates) who attacked rival ships.
- **Privateer** – A pirate who is officially authorized by a government to attack enemy ships.
- **Northwest Passage** – A northern sea route believed to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.
- **Expedition** – A journey undertaken for exploration or discovery.
- **Colony** – A settlement ruled by a distant country.

Differentiation:

- Grades 3–5: Teacher reads selected paragraphs aloud. Students highlight explorer names and circle new vocabulary.
- Grades 6–9: Independent annotation—students mark motives, explorers, and accomplishments.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did England begin exploring during the Age of Exploration?
2. How did early explorers like John Cabot and Henry Hudson contribute to England’s goals?
3. What role did the Sea Dogs play in England’s rise as a global sea power?
4. How did English exploration affect the Indigenous peoples of North America?

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION (15 MINUTES)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/explorers/plans/british.pptx>

Teacher shows the English Exploration PowerPoint. Suggested slide focus:

- Why England entered exploration later than Spain and Portugal
- John Cabot’s voyage to North America
- Henry Hudson’s search for the Northwest Passage
- Sir Francis Drake’s circumnavigation (exploration focus, not piracy)
- England’s early colonization attempts (including Roanoke)

Partner Discussion:

“What qualities or tools would an explorer need to survive long voyages?”

Grades 3–5: Share simple traits like bravery, strength, and good navigation.

Grades 6–9: Include deeper skills like leadership, mapmaking, and surviving harsh conditions.

INTERACTIVE MAP REFERENCE (10 MINUTES)

Teacher briefly points students to the maps already available. Scroll to the middle of the page.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/unit-and-curriculum/english-exploration-in-the-new-world>

Option A (quickest):

- Direct students to the interactive map previously used in the *Search for the Northwest Passage* lesson and explain that the Hudson section is relevant again.

Option B:

- If the teacher prefers, simply reference the explorers and routes described within the English Exploration article without opening the map.

Students identify the regions *using the map they already know* or through the article text:

- Cabot – eastern Canada
- Hudson – Hudson Bay region
- Drake – circumnavigation route (general concept only)

Grades 3–5: Students verbally identify “where in the world” the explorers traveled.

Grades 6–9: Students summarize what each explorer was hoping to find (trade routes, colonies, passage to Asia).

OPTIONAL - DEEP DIVE (15 minutes)

Present (or attach to dashboard) individual biographies on English explorers. Review vocabulary and discussion questions at the bottom of each biography. You can also differentiate the reading level of the passage.

- [John Cabot](#)
- [Henry Hudson](#)
- [Sir Francis Drake](#)
- [Sir Walter Raleigh](#)
- [James Cook](#)
- [George Vancouver](#)

READING COMPREHENSION CHOICE ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

Students choose one reading comprehension activity based on interest or difficulty level:

- [The Plunders of Sir Francis Drake](#) - Lexile 750 and 950
- [Queen Elizabeth I](#) - Lexile 750 and 950
- [John Cabot](#) - Lexile 1100

- [Captain James Cook](#) - Lexile 1100
- [Search for the Northwest Passage](#) - Lexile 720 and 920

Differentiation:

Grades 3–5:

- Complete shorter passages or those with narration
- Answer multiple-choice questions and one short written response

Grades 6–9:

- Choose more complex passages (Cook, NW Passage)
- Write an extended response:
“How did this explorer contribute to England’s growth as a sea power?”

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Teacher reviews:

- England explored to gain wealth, trade, land, and power.
- Explorers like Cabot, Drake, and Hudson expanded England’s knowledge of the world.
- These early voyages set the foundation for later colonization and empire-building.
- The next lesson will focus specifically on pirates and privateers, including the Sea Dogs.