



Day 7 Age of Exploration Unit  
50-75 Minutes

Portuguese Explorations in the New World

*(Adaptable for Grades 3–9)*

---

**Grades: 3–9 (Differentiated)**

**Time: 1–2 class periods**

**Materials:**

- Portuguese Explorers PowerPoint or Article
- Various online and printable activities from [learnaboutamerica.com](http://learnaboutamerica.com) as outlined below.

---

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify major Portuguese explorers, including Prince Henry, Bartolomeu Dias, and Vasco da Gama.
2. Explain why Portugal became a leader in exploration.
3. Describe how Portugal's rejection of Columbus influenced exploration.
4. Analyze the global impact of Portuguese voyages.
5. Demonstrate understanding through differentiated literacy activities.

---

### **Lesson Procedure**

#### **1. Warm-Up (All Grades – 5 minutes)**

**Prompt:**

"Why would a country want to explore unknown oceans? What could they gain?"

---

## 2. PowerPoint Presentation (15–20 minutes)

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

Alternatively, you can conduct the lesson from the Learn About America Portuguese Explorations web page.

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

Teacher presents the slides on:

- Prince Henry & the School of Navigation
- Bartolomeu Dias
- Portugal's rejection of Columbus
- Vasco da Gama
- Significance of Portuguese Exploration and Discussion Questions

---

### Differentiation:

- Grades 3–5: Pause frequently, define vocabulary (spices, trade route, navigation, empire).
- Grades 6–9: Add short inquiry questions such as “Why would Dias rounding the Cape be a turning point?”

---

## 3. Literacy Activities (15-25 minutes)

Learn About America offers a wide range of differentiated literacy activities on Portuguese explorations in the New World. Below are detailed descriptions. Use your discretion to choose the best option for your students.

### **Prince Henry Printable Reading Comprehension - Lexile Apx. 1100**

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorer-activities/prince-henry-printable-reading-comprehension>

**Prince Henry Super Cloze Series (Grades 5+)** - This interactive Cloze Reading Activity is designed to reinforce key historical concepts about Prince Henry through an engaging, differentiated format. Students complete fill-in-the-blank passages using drag-and-drop vocabulary, with features like limited dictionary hints, read-aloud, and three progressive difficulty levels. Built-in scoring, printable reports, and customization options make it ideal for independent practice, centers, or blended learning environments.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorer-activities/prince-henrys-school-of-navigation-super-cloze-series>

### **Vasco da Gama Printable Reading Comprehension - Lexile Apx. 1200**

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorer-activities/vasco-da-gama-printable-reading-comprehension>

### **Portuguese Explorers Online or Printable Reading Comprehension - Lexile 850 or 1000**

Allows for text customization, narration, and annotation. Complete online or print out packet. Students can choose from passages and question sets at different lexile levels.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorer-activities/portuguese-explorations-in-the-new-world-online-or-printable-reading-comprehension>

### **Accomplishments of Portuguese Explorers - Auto-Grade Short Answer Writing Prompt**

This short-answer essay question asks students to use evidence to describe the accomplishments of Portuguese explorers in the New world. Their responses are automatically graded by the system using a pre-set rubric that assigns a score from **1 to 100**.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/admin/pages/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/explorer-activities/portuguese-explorations-in-the-new-world-auto-grade-short-answer-prompt>

## **4. Extension: (15 minutes)**

Small-group historical debate:

Who was more important to exploration—Prince Henry, Dias, or da Gama? Why?

Rationale (Telling Points)

### **Prince Henry the Navigator (support + leadership)**

- Did **not** sail himself very far.
- Started a **navigation school** and hired the best mapmakers.
- Paid for many voyages down the coast of Africa.
- Encouraged sailors to push farther than before.

**Why he matters:** Without Prince Henry's money, planning, and support, the other two explorers might not have been able to succeed.

---

### Bartholomeu Dias (breakthrough explorer)

- First European to sail around the **Cape of Good Hope** (1488).
- Proved that the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean were connected.

**Why he matters:** He showed the route to Asia *was actually possible*, even though he didn't reach India himself.

---

### Vasco da Gama (the finisher)

- First European to reach **India by sea** (1498).
- Opened a **major trade route** for spices, silk, and other goods.
- Made Portugal one of the most powerful nations in the world.

**Why he matters:** His voyage directly changed world history and global trade.

---

## 5. Portuguese Explorers Fact Sort (10 minutes)

This online drag-and-drop activity challenges students to sort debate points into the treasure chests of Prince Henry, Bartholomeu Dias, and Vasco da Gama based on each explorer's contributions to the Age of Exploration. After organizing the evidence, students receive an instantly generated, printable score report that helps them evaluate their understanding and support a written argument about which explorer was most important.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/explorers-and-the-age-of-exploration/unit-and-curriculum/portuguese-explorers-fact-sort>