

Prince Henry Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Prince Henry the Navigator was a Portuguese explorer, soldier and prince. Although Prince Henry rarely participated in explorations, he sent many expeditions from Portugal to the west coast of Africa, and was responsible for Portugal's influence in the Great Age of Exploration. Because of Prince Henry, Portuguese explorers were the first to sail to Africa's Gambia River.

Exploring the West African Coast

Prince Henry sponsored explorations that accomplished much for Portugal. Not only did his expeditions succeed in mapping much of the coast of west-Africa, but they also succeeded in spreading Christianity, defeating Muslims (enemies of the Portuguese at the time), and establishing new trade routes. Prince Henry's primary motivation, however, for exploring the west coast of Africa was to see how far Muslim lands extended to the south (to defeat them), and to find the legendary Christian empire of the priest-king Prester-John (who didn't actually exist). In 1419, Prince Henry started the first school of navigation at Sagres, Portugal. The goal of the school was to train people in navigation, map-making and science to prepare them to sail around the west coast of Africa.

Legacy of Prince Henry's School of Navigation

Prince Henry's school of navigation resulted in a breakthrough for Portuguese navigation. Before Prince Henry, sailors and navigators refused to sail toward Africa. They were scared of sea monsters and boiling water near the equator. In fact, no sailor had ever sailed into the "Sea of Darkness", which the Portuguese considered to be any part of the ocean south of 27 degrees north latitude (about Cape Bojador). Prince Henry's school sent 14 expeditions into "The Sea of Darkness". Prince Henry himself even convinced some explorers to go further south. Prince Henry's influence was the first step in finding the vaunted sea route to the Indies.

1. The word “vaunted,” used in the last sentence of this passage, comes from the Latin word “vanus” meaning “vain.” Based on this, infer the meaning of vaunted as used in the passage.

- a) Highly praised
- b) Modest
- c) Abandoned
- d) Exquisite

2. Which statement about Prince Henry is supported by the passage?

- a) He did not personally participate in many explorations but influenced the journeys of others
- b) He was an arrogant leader who exerted great control on all explorations
- c) He was the sole explorer in the expedition to Africa's Gambia River
- d) He was a political leader who did not exhibit much interest in the Age of Exploration

3. Which of the following was one of Prince Henry's goals of exploration?

- a) Discovering the extent of Muslim territory
- b) Finding Prester-John's empire
- c) Both of the above
- d) Neither of the above

4. Which sentence from the passage supports the claim that Prince Henry expanded the geographical limits of Portuguese exploration?

- a) In 1419, Prince Henry started the first school of navigation at Sagres, Portugal.
- b) Prince Henry sponsored explorations that accomplished much for Portugal.
- c) Because of Prince Henry, Portuguese explorers were the first to sail to Africa's Gambia River.
- d) They were scared of sea monsters and boiling water near the equator.

5. Which statement about the Sea of Darkness is supported by the passage?

- a) It was frequently traversed by Portuguese sailors.
- b) Sailors avoided it due to fear of the unknown.
- c) Prince Henry encouraged members of his school to sail around it.
- d) It refers to any part of the ocean south of 30 degrees latitude.

6. Which of the following did Prince Henry not influence?

- a) A school of navigation in Portugal
- b) The discovery of a sea route to the Indies
- c) Trips further south than the Sea of Darkness
- d) The discovery of Prester-John's Christian empire

7. Which best describes Prince Henry?

- a) Greedy
- b) Pioneering
- c) Lethargic
- d) Independent

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1. (a)
2. (a)
3. (c)
4. (c)
5. (b)
6. (d)
7. (b)

