

GeoStory
MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Voyages Across the Ocean

Exploration via the ocean has increased our knowledge of the world

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Use this GeoStory in formal or informal instruction to provide information about the voyages of numerous historical navigators and explorers. This GeoStory helps students understand the importance of ocean exploration in contributing to our knowledge of the world. It discusses the expeditions of explorers—from the 1400s BCE to the early 20th century—who navigated the ocean to explore the globe and adventure to unknown lands.

Although this GeoStory is not meant to be a comprehensive history of exploration, the voyages recounted here retain their geographic, social, and historical significance.

QUESTIONS

- Who is considered to be one of the greatest travelers of the Middle Ages because of the distance he traveled? Moroccan explorer **Ibn Battuta** is considered to be one of the greatest travelers of the Middle Ages because he covered 120,000 kilometers (75,000 miles).
- What is one reason Pytheas of Massalia is recognized as being an important explorer? Pytheas of Massalia is recognized as being an important explorer because **he was the first European to circumnavigate the British Isles.**
- What were two contributions of Chinese explorer Zheng He's voyages? Zheng He's expeditions **contributed to maritime knowledge and increased China's global influence.**
- Which navigational tool did Polynesians use prior to the use of compasses or charts? Prior to the use of compasses or charts, the Polynesians used **stick charts** to navigate the Pacific Ocean.
- Name at least two explorers who attempted unsuccessfully to find the Northwest Passage.
 - Portuguese explorer **Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo** in the 16th century
 - English navigator **Henry Hudson** in the 17th century
 - English explorer **James Cook** in the 18th century
- Where is the Strait of Magellan located and which oceans does it link? The Strait of Magellan, first navigated by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, is a channel located at the **southern tip of South America**, linking the **Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.**
- How did the first circumnavigation of the globe contribute to our knowledge of the Earth? The first circumnavigation of the globe, completed by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan's expedition in 1522, proved that the Earth's shape is spherical.
- Why is British explorer Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton's second expedition so noteworthy? Shackleton's second expedition is considered to be noteworthy because **all of the crew members survived the sinking of the ship and isolation in the remote Antarctic.** The ship became trapped and crushed in ice, forcing the crew to abandon it. The crew made it to Elephant Island, where they established a refuge. Then Shackleton

and several crew members sailed to South Georgia Island, where they found help to rescue the rest of the crew.

- Who was the first person to reach the North Pole?

American explorer **Robert Edwin Peary** was the first person to reach the North Pole, where he remained for 30 hours. However, this claim has since been disputed.

For Further Exploration

Articles & Profiles

- NOAA Ocean Explorer: History: Timeline
- NOAA Ocean Explorer: History Questions: Why Explore

Websites

- The Mariners' Museum: Exploration Through the Ages
- National Geographic: Committee for Research and Exploration



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