

Document-Based Assessment

Why Did Europeans Explore the Seas?

In the 1400s, Europeans began to embark on long and dangerous voyages to unknown destinations. Why did this age of exploration begin? In Documents A and B, a contemporary observer and a modern-day historian describe the impetus behind these early expeditions.

Document A

"The discovery of the new Western World followed, as an incidental consequence, from the long struggle of the nations of Europe for commercial supremacy and control of the traffic with the East. In all these dreams of the politicians and merchants, sailors and geographers, who pushed back the limits of the unknown world, there is the same glitter of gold and precious stones, the same odour of far-fetched spices."

—Sir Walter Raleigh, 1509

Document B

"The starting point for the European expansion out of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic continental shelf had nothing to do with, say, religion or the rise of capitalism—but it had a great deal to do with pepper. . . . [Pepper] comprised more than half of all the spice imports into Italy over a period of more than a century. No other single spice came within one-tenth of the value of pepper. . . . However, since about 1470 the Turks had been impeding the overland trade routes east from the Mediterranean. As a result the great Portuguese, Italian, and Spanish explorers all sailed west or south in order to reach the Orient. The Americas were discovered as a by-product in the search for pepper."

—From *Seeds of Change* by Henry Hobhouse

This page from a sixteenth-century book about navigation depicts England's Queen Elizabeth in the ship at the right. ►

Document C



◀ This fifteenth-century painting depicts Henry the Navigator, standing at right in round black hat. A Portuguese prince, Henry did much to advance maritime exploration and the fields of navigation and cartography.

Document D



Analyzing Documents

Use your knowledge of European exploration and Documents A, B, C, and D to answer questions 1–4.

- Documents A and B both make the point that the discovery of new lands was motivated by
 - religious fanaticism.
 - adventurous dreams.
 - wanting to make money.
 - Renaissance ideals.
- What motivation for exploration is implied in Document C?
 - the search for spices
 - the desire to please king or country
 - the desire to spread Christianity
 - both B and C
- What does Document D suggest about how European monarchs viewed exploration?
 - They saw it as vitally important to their nations.
 - They viewed exploration as interesting but unnecessary.
 - They saw it as important but not worth spending money on.
 - They had no opinion about exploration.
- Writing Task** Using information from the chapter, assess the various motivations for exploration. Are there any that are not shown in these documents? Choose the motivation you think was the most compelling for Europeans. Use specific evidence from the chapter and documents to support your argument.