Across the Atlantic

Trace the causes and consequences of European exploration.

SS24.8.11 "Explain the motivations for exploration by European nations. 11a Summarize how expanding knowledge of geographical features and the development of navigational technology contributed to global exploration by Europeans..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline knowledge and tools that helped sailors travel, circle European goals, and number two different effects of contact or exchange.

Why Sail West?

1. In 1492, a ship leaving Spain could sail west across the Atlantic without knowing the exact distance to Asia. European sailors had learned more about Atlantic winds and currents from earlier voyages along Africa's coast and among its islands. Better charts recorded coastlines and ports, while the magnetic compass helped sailors keep a direction when land vanished. The astrolabe helped estimate latitude by measuring the height of the sun or stars. These tools did not make voyages safe, but they made longer ocean crossings possible.

2. Rulers also had reasons to pay for risky trips. Spain's monarchs backed Christopher Columbus, who hoped to find a western sea route to Asian markets for valuable goods. European kingdoms competed for trade, territory, and power. As colonial empires grew, mercantilism encouraged rulers to control trade and obtain precious metals, often by using colonies as sources of raw materials. Some Europeans also wanted to spread Christianity. These goals could overlap: a voyage might promise both profits for a kingdom and new converts for its church.

3. After Columbus reached the Caribbean, contact with Europeans brought severe harm to Indigenous peoples, including the Taíno. Europeans seized land and forced many people into labor. Diseases from the Eastern Hemisphere, including smallpox, spread through the Americas, where Indigenous communities had no previous exposure; many people died. The Columbian Exchange moved more than disease: American maize and potatoes changed diets and increased food supplies in parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia. European livestock reshaped American landscapes through grazing, while sugarcane plantations drove the forced migration of enslaved Africans.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did knowledge of winds and currents work with navigational tools to make longer voyages possible?

2. Why might Spain's monarchs have paid for Columbus's voyage? Explain two goals from the passage.

3. Explain two ways initial contact harmed Indigenous peoples in the Caribbean or elsewhere in the Americas.

4. How did the Columbian Exchange change both diets and environments?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence museum label about an Atlantic voyage. Connect a navigation aid to a European goal, then explain an effect on Indigenous peoples and two different kinds of change caused by the Columbian Exchange. End by explaining why the label includes more than one viewpoint.

ANSWER KEY

Across the Atlantic

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.11

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline knowledge and tools that helped sailors travel, circle European goals, and number two different effects of contact or exchange. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did knowledge of winds and currents work with navigational tools to make longer voyages possible?	**Knowledge of winds and currents helped sailors plan a crossing. Charts, the compass, and the astrolabe helped them find their way when land was out of sight.**
2	Why might Spain's monarchs have paid for Columbus's voyage? Explain two goals from the passage.	**They hoped for access to valuable Asian trade and greater power for Spain. Spreading Christianity was another possible goal.**
3	Explain two ways initial contact harmed Indigenous peoples in the Caribbean or elsewhere in the Americas.	**Europeans seized land and forced Indigenous people into labor. Introduced diseases also spread and killed many people.**
4	How did the Columbian Exchange change both diets and environments?	**Maize and potatoes changed diets and increased food supplies in parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia. European livestock changed American landscapes through grazing.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A compass helped sailors hold a direction across the Atlantic as Spain sought new trade routes. When Europeans reached the Caribbean, they took land from Indigenous communities. Diseases carried across the ocean caused many deaths among Indigenous peoples. American potatoes changed diets across the ocean, while European livestock changed the land through grazing. This label includes different viewpoints because a voyage that offered Spain opportunities brought serious losses to Indigenous peoples.

Accept other accurate examples from the passage, including religious goals, forced labor, or the forced migration of enslaved Africans. The museum label should connect causes and consequences rather than list them without explanation.