Routes to Empire

Trace how voyages became systems of power.

9-12.WC.39 "Analyze the causes and consequences of the Age of Discovery and the rise of European Empires."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two reasons Europeans sailed, circle two actions that built empires, and draw an arrow from each circled action to a consequence it helped cause.

From Sea Routes to Overseas Rule

1 In 1498, Vasco da Gama reached India's western coast by sailing around Africa. Portuguese rulers wanted direct access to pepper and other Asian goods, which passed through several trading networks before reaching Europe. Better ocean charts, the magnetic compass, and ships suited to long voyages made the trip possible, but royal funding also mattered. The Portuguese crown hoped to collect profits and weaken rival merchants. Sailors did not discover an empty route: African and Asian merchants already traded across the Indian Ocean. When Portuguese fleets arrived, they entered a busy world of ports, pilots, and competing powers.

2 Portugal could not simply buy its way into every market. Armed ships seized key ports, and forts helped the crown demand passes and fees from vessels in parts of the Indian Ocean. Local rulers sometimes resisted and sometimes made alliances with the newcomers. These choices turned a search for trade into efforts to control trade. Other European states competed for overseas wealth and influence. Spain, for example, backed voyages west across the Atlantic. After Columbus reached the Caribbean in 1492, Spanish conquerors used weapons and alliances with Indigenous groups to take territory in the Americas. Competition for profit and power helped drive empire building.

3 Conquest had consequences far beyond royal treasuries. In the Americas, disease brought from Eurasia killed many Indigenous people, who had little prior exposure to those illnesses. Spanish authorities also forced many survivors to work, including in mines. Silver from American mines crossed the Atlantic to Europe and traveled onward to Asia, linking distant markets. European states gained revenue, but Indigenous communities lost land, lives, and control over labor. In the Indian Ocean, Portuguese attacks disrupted some established routes, although regional traders continued to operate. Maritime technology opened possibilities; military power and labor systems determined who benefited and who paid the cost.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did a Portuguese goal and two resources combine to make da Gama's voyage possible?

2. How did Portuguese forts change a voyage for trade into an effort to build an empire?

3. How did competition for wealth and power contribute to Spanish conquest in the Americas?

4. How did mining silver create different consequences for European states and Indigenous communities?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise a coastal ruler in the Indian Ocean in 1600 who is considering a Portuguese request to build a fort near the harbor. In four sentences, predict one possible trade benefit and two risks, use at least two details from different paragraphs, and explain how the fort could change who controls trade.

Routes to Empire

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two reasons Europeans sailed, circle two actions that built empires, and draw an arrow from each circled action to a consequence it helped cause. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did a Portuguese goal and two resources combine to make da Gama's voyage possible?	**The crown wanted direct access to Asian goods and funded the voyage. Improved navigation tools and ships made the long sea journey possible.**
2	How did Portuguese forts change a voyage for trade into an effort to build an empire?	**Forts helped Portugal demand passes and fees from ships, giving the crown power over trade rather than only a place in it.**
3	How did competition for wealth and power contribute to Spanish conquest in the Americas?	**Spain backed Atlantic voyages while European states sought overseas wealth and influence. Spanish conquerors then used weapons and Indigenous alliances to take territory.**
4	How did mining silver create different consequences for European states and Indigenous communities?	**Silver brought revenue to European states and entered trade across the Atlantic and onward to Asia. Indigenous communities faced forced labor and lost control over their labor.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Portuguese trade could connect the harbor more directly to European demand for Asian goods. Their armed ships and fort could also let them demand passes and fees from local vessels, weakening the ruler's control. Portuguese attacks might disrupt routes used by merchants who already depend on the port. I would allow trade but reject the fort, since trade might bring new buyers without giving a foreign crown power over local ships.

Accept well-supported predictions that distinguish trade from control of trade. The passage describes Portuguese power in parts of the Indian Ocean, not control of the entire region.