The Age of Exploration extends from the late 15th to the 17th century, and mainly refers to the exploration of the Americas by Europeans. The Library of Congress has exhibitions, primary source collections, interactive presentations, and more resources about the encounters and advances made during this era. Many of the Library’s image-based sources may have been produced at a time hundreds of years after the events they depict. These provide a chance to discuss with your students how our memories of this time period have formed and changed over centuries.

The Library also has treasures of primary sources produced during the Age of Exploration, including amazing and intricate maps (some with sea monsters!) and material culture artifacts.

**NEWS**

- Do you know the six goals of government as stated in the Preamble to the Constitution? Check out our newest lesson plan on this topic which challenges students to define these goals in their own words and match up historic examples of each of these goals being put into action.

- What do women’s suffrage, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Chicano Movement all have in common? They are the legacy of the Fourteenth Amendment. TPS-MTSU has developed a new primary source set to highlight some of the movements, legislations, and moments in U.S. history that tie back to this important constitutional amendment.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- **October 15 (Knoxville)** - “Age of Exploration” Workshop at the East Tennessee History Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. To register, email Lisa Oakley.

- **October 16 (Maryville)** - “Using Primary Sources” Workshop for Blount County Homeschool Group.

- **November 2 (Clarksville)** - “History Day and TPS Introductory Workshop” in partnership with Tennessee History Day from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Jennifer Core.

- **November 6 (Memphis)** - “Trials and Triumphs” Workshop at the National Civil Rights Museum from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.

- **November 13 (Nashville)** - “Growth of a Slave Economy” Workshop in partnership with Traveller’s Rest from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.

- **November 19 (Knoxville)** - “Economics and Culture in the 1920s” Workshop at the East Tennessee History Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. To register, email Lisa Oakley.

**“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:**

*Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomacii traditionem et Americi Vespucii aliorumque hstrationes. [a.k.a., Waldseemüller map, 1507]*

This map, created in the flurry of European discoveries in the New World, finally changed the worldview of Europeans from the old Ptolemaic model. See if you can find the word “America”—the first time a map ever used this label. Print a 12-page puzzle version of the map here (third on the list).

**THEME: AGE OF EXPLORATION**

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LESSON IDEA– ENCOUNTERS WITH COLUMBUS

The story of Christopher Columbus’s encounters in the New World has undergone multiple revisions in the years since 1992 (the 500th anniversary of his “sailing the ocean blue”). This story therefore lends itself well to considering multiple perspectives within familiar narratives.

Start off by having students compare and contrast two images: Columbus taking possession of the new country and Insula Hyspana. How are the Europeans portrayed? How are the natives portrayed? (The natives in the first image are hiding on the right-hand side behind the trees.) Next, share dates, descriptions, and other pertinent bibliographic information. (You can find a description for the book that Insula Hyspana is from here.) How does this new information change the way you look at these images? You may wish to have students fill out this multiple perspectives Venn diagram for the two images. Next, have students read the excerpt from Columbus’s journal from Oct. 11, 1492. How does he describe the natives? Do either of the images corroborate the information or impressions in the journal entry? What does Columbus want from the natives?

Go more in depth with two TPS- MTSU lesson plans: A Matter of Perspective and Culture Clash. Or, for a look at what befalls the natives after European colonization of Latin America, you can read the work of Girolamo Benzoni or search for images such as this Spanish one from 1728.

This lesson idea can meet TN standards for 7th grade Social Studies (7.75 & Primary Documents to Read) and English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text).

LESSON IDEA– DE SOTO’S TREK THROUGH THE SOUTHEAST

Hernando de Soto was one of the most successful of the Spanish conquistadors. He initially earned this wealth in the new world as a slave trader in Central America. He was later part of the group that devastated the Incan empire and took control of their lands and wealth. He was later made governor of Cuba and sent to conquer Florida. During his expedition into Florida, he and his men traversed much of the southeastern United States including Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. He was the first European to see the Mississippi River. No other Europeans would travel through that region for another century.

Begin by having your students examine this map that chronicles de Soto’s journey across the southeast. What is familiar on this map? What place names are still used today? What is unfamiliar on this map? What conclusions can we draw about de Soto’s journey based on this map?

Next have students read two excerpts from one of the manuscripts written during the journey. (You may want to read the text page for notes to help you guide your students.) The first excerpt discusses their time in Cherokee country at the northern most point of the journey. Ask student to summarize the passage and to locate the area discussed in this passage on the map. The second excerpt discusses de Soto’s death. Again have students summarize the passage. Can they place on the map where de Soto died? In both of these excerpts, how did the conquistadors interact with the native population? How does this compare with interactions in other parts of the Americas? Ask students to describe their impressions of the native communities as given in these two passages. What can we determine about the native peoples from the perspective of the Spanish? How do you think the natives might have viewed the conquistadors, keeping in mind that these would have been the first Europeans in the area?

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards 4th & 7th grade Social Studies (4.4 and 7.73) and English/Language Arts (Reading: Informational Text).
Lesson Idea— God, Gold, and Glory

Explorers traveled to the Americas with the desire to spread Christianity to supposedly uncivilized peoples, in search of riches, and in pursuit of fame. Sometimes explorers achieved their goals, and sometimes they came up short. Show your students the following illustrations and see if they can identify reasons why explorers might want to travel to America. Moreover, ask your students to judge explorers’ success rates in achieving their goals. Also keep in mind that most of the illustrations were completed many years after the actual events. How might this fact impact the artwork?

Start off with explorers’ missionary goals. Look at this picture of an Aztec worship service. If your students were Spanish Christians, what would they think if they saw this scene play out in real time? As they reflect on that question, have you students look at the priest in this picture. Who is near the priest? What is the priest’s role in this scene? What does this say about explorers’ missionary efforts?

Secondly, analyze the search for riches. Have your students look at this picture of an encounter between Spanish explorer Hernando Cortes and Aztec leader Montezuma. Look at Montezuma’s clothes. If your students were explorers, what would they think about Montezuma’s clothes? Compare this image to a picture of Spanish soldiers torturing an indigenous Inca from Peru. Why might the Spanish resort to such brutality?

Finally, examine the pursuit of fame. Look at this picture of a battle between the Inca and Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro’s soldiers. Do your students trust the accuracy of this picture? If they had been involved in such a battle and survived, what would they tell friends and family back home? Compare this image with another picture, a portrait of Pizarro. For what reasons would an artist paint an explorer’s picture?

This lesson idea can meet TN curriculum standards for 7th grade Social Studies (7.68 and 7.72) and 6th-8th grade Visual Arts (4.1 and 4.2).

Lesson Idea— The Evolution of Cartography

The Age of Exploration brought about many discoveries, inventions, and technological advancements. One of the most impressive advancements was the evolution of cartography. With explorers bringing back new geographic knowledge, a flood of new maps were created—some decorative, some symbolic, and some meant to be used for navigation. The maps linked below offer opportunities to discuss the exploration of the Americas in terms of advancements in geographic knowledge and cartography.

Begin by separating students into 5 teams, with each team examining one map created by a Spanish, Dutch, Italian, German, or French cartographer. (It will work best if they can view/zoom in on the maps on a computer or tablet.) Have them come up with as many observations about their map as they can. What parts of the map can they recognize? Can they see any mistakes? Do they see any strange or unusual parts of the map? Then have the students present what they observed about their maps. Why do they think certain areas of the map look different than we know they do today? What do they think “terra incognita,” “terra incognita,” and “terra inconnues” might mean and why are these phrases used in these maps?

Once the students have all presented, have them decide as a class on the timeline of these maps. See if they can put them in order from oldest to newest, and then reveal to them the actual dates and areas of origin of these maps. After the chronological timeline of maps is set, you may wish to further the analysis process by asking them what remaining questions these maps raise in their minds. Just how unknown was this “New World” to Europeans? How do they portray the different roles of the different kingdoms/countries who were doing the “discovering”? End by showing students this interactive presentation about the cartographic formation of N. America. This exercise meets TN curriculum standards for 4th & 7th grade Social Studies (4.6, 7.71, and 7.73).
THE EAGLE, SNAKE, AND CACTUS

The Eagle, the Snake, and the Cactus in the Founding of Tenochtitlan [1585, detail]

According to Aztec prophecies, the Aztecs were supposed to build their capital city on the place where they saw an eagle, holding a snake, perched on a cactus, and on an island in the middle of a lake. When the Aztec actually encountered this phenomena, they built the city of Tenochtitlan. Mexico City, the capital of Mexico, now stands in place of Tenochtitlan. Compare the above illustration to the Mexican flag.

AZTEC AND INCAN CITIES

Civitates Orbis Terrarum [1572]

Tenochtitlan and Cusco were the capital cities of the Aztec and the Inca, respectively. These 1572 images are based on sketches from Hernan Cortes published in 1524. Have your students discuss the differences and similarities between the two and what we can understand about Incan and Aztec societies from the way their cities are portrayed.

THE AZTEC CALENDAR

Aztec calendar stone [1880, detail]

The Aztecs were known for their advanced knowledge. They created a 360-day calendar before the Europeans ever arrived. Compare the above calendar to calendars today. Also take a look at this illustration. Each of symbols represent months of the year. See if you can match these symbols with the symbols on the above picture. Check out this second Aztec calendar.

MAYAN JAGUAR

Monumental jaguar sculpture [AD 600-900]

The jaguar held a special place within Mayan culture, and this particular piece likely stood beside the throne of a lord or king. To further explore these elements of Mayan culture, follow this link, then have students discuss what the artist may have done to create this piece, as well as why they think the Mayans would have considered the jaguar so important and special.