Age Of Exploration Essay, Research Paper

Age of Exploration

AP Questions

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1. In what ways was the Age of Exploration an extension of the Renaissance?

The Age of Exploration was an extension of the Renaissance because of many factors. The rich during the Renaissance wanted spices. Spices they could only get in Asia.To get the spices invloved, traveling through Asia and the Middle East was necessary. The discovery of North America led to the idea of the Northwest Passage.

Gold and other riches were sought after by various European monarchs, in North America. These monarchs needed the gold and other riches to help pay off there debts, which at that time were extremely high due to the money spent on artwork, during the Renaissance. Monarchies, especially from France, England, Portugal and Spain, all were after the riches the New World could provide them with.

Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain endorsed these ideas and the voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Columbus sailed with the intent of reaching Asia, and upon his arrival in the New World, he believed he had reached Asia, although a remote part of it. This landmark voyage was yet another reason to rethink old ideas. Columbus proved many people wrong, and in the spirit of the Renaissance, his voyage added fuel to the burning fire of adventure and discovery.

2. What relationship, if any, exists between the Age of Exploration and the Crusades?

There was an extremely strong relationship between the crusades and the Age of Exploration. The crusades were, and still are, the largest Religious wars ever fought, and upon the eventual fall of Jerusalem, there was a need felt to recover lost territory. This territory was viewed the same as the New World was viewed. The citizens of Jerusalem were viewed as lost souls that needed help in finding their religious path, the same as the Native Americans were viewed. It was thought of as a mission to save souls, just like the crusades.

The Crusades became a blood bath in the name of God, pitting Catholics against the Islam Nation, with both sides fighting for what they believed to be their own. In the New World, missionaries often could be just as cruel, converting by means of force, and often not stopping to consider the culture of the people, they were trying to “save”.

On the other hand, missionaries such as Bartholomew de Las Casas, spoke out against the injustice against the natives. He told the cruel and unfair missionaries what they were doing was wrong. They should not force their religion onto other people, but present it to them, and let the individual decide. The intention of the crusades and the conversion of the native people was honorable, but both proved to be egocentric European experiments, with no regard to the culture and/ or traditions of others people.

3. What factors (social, political, geographical) enabled Portugal to take the early lead in exploration?

Portugal had many advantages, which other European countries did not have, that lead to their early lead in exploration. Portugal’s monarchy was highly in favor and supported of the exploration of the New World. Christopher Columbus discovered America.

Portuguese sailors discovered South America, and laid claims to the country of Brazil. The Portuguese discovered South America because of their closeness to Equator, and due to wind patterns at that time. Although Portugal’s location helped them get a head start in the exploration, they could not of done it without their vast number of brave and skilled soldiers.

The monarchy of Portugal wanted to have land claims in The New World, expanding Portugal’s vast empire worldwide. Helping Portugal produce sailors was the navigational and sailing school, established by Prince Henry, in Sagres. This school helped produce some of the best sailors this world has ever known.

Portugal was a sailing nation from the beginning, before other nations began to sail. The experience of the Portuguese sailors as well as the location of Portugal was the main factors in its head start to exploration. Other nations did not have the above, especially an established sailing school, and because of this there was a delay in exploration for other European countries.

4. Discuss the major factors that influenced the original Papal demarcation line of 1493 and its revision in 1494?

The purpose of the Treaty of Tordesillas, or the Papal demarcation line was to settle land disputes between Portugal and Spain. The Treaty of Tordesillas divided South America into two, from pole to pole. Pope Alexander VI put The Papal demarcation into effect in 1493. All lands east of the line were given to Portugal, and all lands west were given to Spain. Spain by far received the best deal. The Spanish received more territory, because Pope Alexander VI was originally from Spain, and was still loyal to his native country. The rulers of Spain at that time were Ferdinand and Isabell, and their persuasion to the Papal court helped Spain acquire the better part of the deal.

King John II of Portugal was extremely dissatisfied with the location of the Papal demarcation, because he felt Portugal was not being represented justly. In 1494 the Papal demarcation line was moved 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, giving Portugal an extra 270 leagues and also granting Portugal a foothold on what is now the Brazilian coast, discovered in 1500 by Pedro Alvarez Cabral.

5. Discuss the reasons and political factors which caused England and France to delay joining the exploration of new territories?

England and France both delayed exploration because of the political turmoil caused by the Protestant reformation. France and England both had too much political turmoil to send explorers to The New World. A civil war erupted in France due to the Protestant Reformation.

When ten-year-old Charles ascended the French throne, his mother, Catherine de Medici, controlled the whole of France. It was her wish to massacre all of the leading Protestants near the time of her daughter’s wedding. These killings began at sunrise on St. Bartholomew’s day, and were continued all over the nation.

In 1574, Henry III became King of France; he ended up banning the Protestant religion, which in turn sparked the war of the Three Henry’s. It involved Henry III, ruler of France, Huguenot Henry of Guise, and Catholic Henry of Guise. Huguenot Henry of Guise as well as Henry III were both assassinated, leaving Catholic Henry of Guise to lead France. At this time, both English and French were too involved in war and religious reformation to be able to back explorations.

6. Discuss the following: Portuguese and Spanish explorations brought with it Catholic missionaries bent upon conversion. Though they achieved much success in Central and South America, they failed, by comparison, in Asia.

Portuguese and Spanish exploration had good success in converting Southern and Central Americans. Southern and Central Americans had very weak religious beliefs. Southern and Central America religion was never written down, was down passed generation to generation by examples and through stories. Southern and Central Americans believed everything that Europeans told them, especially concerning God.

The Central and Southern American people treated the explorers like God. They had never seen them or ships like those that the explorers used. These natives felt as if the explorers and missionaries were sent to help them change from their barbaric religions to gentler ones such as Catholicism. Natives in these lands often offered human sacrifices and tortured innocent people offering them to their gods. The missionaries told these barbaric individuals what they were doing was wrong.

The missionaries did not have very good success in Asia because the majority of Asian countries already had religions, and were extremely devout and faithful to them. Missionaries had very little success in Japan and none in China due to the already established religions in those areas.

In addition, Asians knew the missionaries and explorers were not divine people, sent to them. Many trips had already been made to Asia. Asians wanted no part in the Catholic missionaries that were coming to their home country. Buddhism and other such religions were already strongly established in Asia, creating strong resistance to the advance of Christianity and Christian missionaries.

7. What social/ political effects did European exploration have upon the societies conquered?

The European explorers had a direct influence on the social and political effects of the societies conquered. They brought diseases over to North and South America. The explorers were responsible for millions of deaths. In some cases, they destroyed settlements, nearly wiping whole tribes out. They also began to force natives into slavery.

European explorers also helped influence the style of government in the New World. The Canadian government would not be the same, if Europeans explorers had not helped establish governments in the lands they conquered.

The Europeans, once in power, ruled in an oppressive nature against the natives. A direct result of the European arrival was the decrease of the native population of New Spain (present day New Mexico) The native population in New Spain went down by nearly 10 %. The Europeans stole native land, and destroyed land that natives had worked so hard to maintain. They set up mining operations, which destroyed the environment, and used native slaves to mine. Once they were done with the mine, they never bothered to repair the landscape, which they damaged.

Although the Europeans brought much destruction and despair to the New World, they also introduced new methods to the Native people. They introduced new languages, and what they believed to be more efficient structure to the Native people. The cruelty shown to the natives by Europeans was not, in my opinion warranted, however, without these early explorations and changes, society as we know it would not exist today.

8. What factors caused Portugal, and later Spain, to relinquish their lead in empire building?

The main factors causing both Spain and Portugal to relinquish their leads in empire building were incidents of bad misfortune, such as shipwrecks and unsuccessful excursions. Other reasons include much of Portuguese and Spanish land was claimed previously by Sir Francis Drake for England. Expeditions were costly and finances were increasingly difficult to come by.

Interest had waned in exploration. There was not much left of the New World to explore, and the excitement of the people was no longer at the level it was previously. Journeys ended in tragedy while accomplishing nothing, and monarchies no longer felt a need to finance these unsuccessful expeditions.

10. In what ways did Spanish colonial conquest differ from that of Portugal?

Spanish colonial conquest differed from that of Portugal mainly by the way they conquered their lands. Spain was violent and thoughtless when it came to acquiring what they wished for. From Cortes’ brutal conquest of the Aztec empire, to Pizarro’s overthrow of the Inca empire, the Spanish considered the end to justify the means.

On the other hand, the Portuguese were more considerate than other nations. Portuguese explorers did not use violent means in order to achieve what they wanted, but in comparison to the Spanish, Portugal was rather considerate.

9. Discuss the following: The age of Exploration was both the cause and the effects of the rise of the European middle class.

Prior to the Age of Exploration, people fell into two dpistinct groups; the aristocracy and the peasants. This led to all power being concentrated in the hands of a select few. The beginning of the Age of Exploration led to new jobs being in demand, requiring labor from a working class, which at the time did not exist. These new jobs were centered around the expeditions and what they needed in order to complete long, tedious voyages to the New World.

People were now employed in a greatly expanding industry, as the building of ships, the preparation of vessels for sea, and making or harvesting the supplies and food necessary in order to complete a journey. With the decline of the feudal system, each ruler had more money and power, allowing him or her to finance expeditions. These expeditions required a new class of people, the middle class, for employment in the nautical occupation. As the nautical occupation grew, the middle class grew right along with it, in order to keep up with the demand that this flourishing industry had established.

The middle class in Europe grew, not only out of economic necessity, but also as a result of the awakening caused by both the Renaissance and the new ideas and values brought back by the explorers who had visited distant land and cultures.