Name: Div.: Date:

**The European Age of Exploration: Why Explore?**

Use the following sources of information to answer the questions below, on a separate sheet of paper. Make sure your answers refer to each source you are using to answer.

1. Quoting from the information attached explain why the Age of Exploration started (Why did they go west?).
2. Referencing your sources (Documents) create a chart to categorize the main motivations that people and countries had to explore/colonize.
3. List the main resources/materials that Europeans seemed to be interested in finding.

**Background**

**The European Age of Exploration: Why Explore?**

**Sources**

Until about 1453, Western Europe was mostly cut off and isolated from the **Silk Roads**. Without access to the wealth, trade goods, technologies, and ideas that travelled from China, India, the Middle East, and North Africa, Europeans lived in the “**Dark Ages**.” This meant that the European economy was based on agriculture alone (**Manor System**), European politics were decentralized (**Feudalism**), and life was poor and hard for the majority of people. The only cultural unity and comfort provided to Europeans came from the **Catholic Church**, which established common religious laws and gave people hope in salvation.

A few events began to change the direction of European history and eventually allow Europeans to dominate global trade. The first was the **Black Death**, or the Plague, which came to Europe through trade routes in 1348. While, at first, this was devastating to the European population, in the long-term this disease actually allowed survivors a better standard of living. Wages and salaries rose as survivors had less competition for jobs. The next major turning point was the **Fall of Constantinople** (or the Fall of the Byzantine Empire) in 1453, when the **Ottoman Empire** (Islamic) invaded. While at first this represented a huge defeat for Christianity and blocked off Europe from any access it had to the Silk Roads, in the long-term it would force Europeans to find wealth somewhere else.

Up until 1453 only the city-states of the **Italian Peninsula** had any access to the wealth and trade of the Silk Roads. After 1453 it would be up to innovative and risk-taking European adventurers to begin a series of voyages and expeditions to link Europe to the global trade and wealth of the east. It would be known as **The Age of Exploration**.

**Document 1**

Source: Historian John P. McKay describes the impact of the Fall of Constantinople (1453) on Europe and the role it played in causing the Age of Exploration in *A History of Western Society* 10th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2011).

By the mid-sixteenth century Ottomans controlled the sea trade in the eastern Mediterranean, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and the rest of North Africa, and their power extended into Europe as far west as Vienna.

Ottoman expansion frightened Europeans. The Ottoman armies seemed nearly invincible and the empire’s desire for expansion limitless. In France in the sixteenth century, twice as many books were printed about the Turkish threat as about the American discoveries. The strength of the Ottomans helps explain some of the missionary fervor Christians brought to new territories. It also raised economic concerns. With trade routes to the east in the hands of the Ottomans, Europeans needed to find new trade routes.

**Document 2**

Source: Quote from *Seeds of Change* by Henry Hobhouse

The starting point for the European expansion 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] compromised 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.”

**Document 3**

Source: An excerpt from the journal of Christopher Columbus, an Italian explorer who led voyages funded by the monarchs of Spain in 1492. Columbus sailed west from Spain in order to reach India while avoiding Africa. He died believing his men discovered a westward route to India, but in fact, landed in the Caribbean. Medieval History Sourcebook: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus1.asp>

Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians, and princes who love and promote the holy Christian faith, and are … determined to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the above-mentioned countries of India, to see the said princes, people, and territories, and to learn their disposition and the proper method of converting them to our holy faith; and furthermore directed that I should not proceed by land to the East, as is customary, but by a Westerly route, in which direction we have hitherto no certain evidence that any one has gone. So after having … ordered me to proceed with a sufficient armament to the said regions of India, and for that purpose granted me great favors, and ennobled me that thenceforth I might call myself Don, and be ... Governor in all the islands and continents which I might discover and acquire, or which may hereafter be discovered and acquired in the ocean.

**Document 4**

Source: Expert of “*Letters Patent*” given to John Cabot by England’s King Henry VII 1492

To find, discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians.

John and his sons or their heirs and deputies may conquer, occupy and possess whatsoever such towns, castles, cities and islands discovered by them, but, they must pay to us, either in goods or money, the fifth part of the whole capital gained.

**Document 5**

Source: Expert of Writing of Sir Walter Raleigh (1509)

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 odor of far-fetched spices.

**Document 6**

Source: Miguel Leon-Portilla, ed. The Broken Spears: Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico. Beacon Press

At the request of the Aztec Prince Ixtlilxochitl, Cortes and his men ate the gifts of food that had been brought to them. They walked into the city, and all the people came to cheer and welcome them. They knelt down and adored them as sons of the Sun, their gods.

Cortez was very grateful; he wished to repay their kindness by teaching them the law of God. He told them the emperor of the Christians had sent him here to teach them in the law of Christ. He explained them the mysteries of Christianity.

He concluded the lesson by telling them how they were not in God’s grace, and they were here only to save their souls.

**Document 7**

Source: Law of Burgos, 1512

Regulation of the Spanish Crown Whereas, the King, my Lord and Father, and the Queen, my Mistress and Mother (may she rest in glory!), always desired that the chiefs and Indians of the Island of Española be brought to a knowledge of our Holy Catholic Faith, … it has become evident that nothing can be done to bring them to a knowledge of our Faith (necessary for their salvation).

**Document 8**

Source: Merrick Whitcomb, ed., “The Gold of the Indies — 1559,” Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, The Department of History of the University of Pennsylvania

From New Spain are obtained gold and silver, insects that can be turned into crimson dye, leather, cotton, sugar and other things; but from Peru nothing is obtained except minerals. The fifth part of all that is produced goes to the king. Great quantities of gold and silver used to be out in the open; since all of that is gone gold and silver now have to be mined.

**Document 9**

Source: Samuel de Champlain, *Voyages* (1604)

The inclinations of men differ according to their varied dispositions; and each one in his calling has his particular end in view. Some aim at gain, some at glory, some at the public weal. The greater number are engaged in trade, and especially that which is transacted on the sea. . . . For this reason, many princes have striven to find a northerly route to China, in order to facilitate commerce with the Orientals, in the belief that this route would be shorter and less dangerous.

**Document 10**

Source: Nicolas Le Challeux sailed from France with Captain Ribaut in 1565 and wrote about his adventures

*“The news of this voyage quickly spread…and many men were persuaded to serve under the command of this captain the King’s authority. They were moved by many reasons:…The rumor spread here that Florida promised an abundance (a great deal) of all that man might desire in the world…there was neither frost nor snow there, nor any northern cold, and it escaped the burning heat of the South. Without labor (hard work) or tillage (farming), the ground brought forth enough crops to feed all of the natives as well as those who had come to live there…*

*This country is also rich in gold and in all sorts of animals, both tame and wild…There are high hill, pleasant streams and rivers, and many kinds of trees fill the air with sweet scents”*

**Document 11**

Source: Excerpt from a letter. [Taken from The American Journey, McGraw Hill, 1998]

*“In this large and very fertile vineyard of the Indian tribes that they call the Pimas, I have been able, with God’s help, to wash about three hundred Indians in the holy water of baptism…God willing, hundreds, and later, thousands will be gathered into the heart of our sweet, most holy, Mother Church…In this area where I am working, a mission has been established [set up], and…We are now in the process of building a new church…”*

*-*Father Kino, Catholic Priest, 1687