

Vasco da Gama

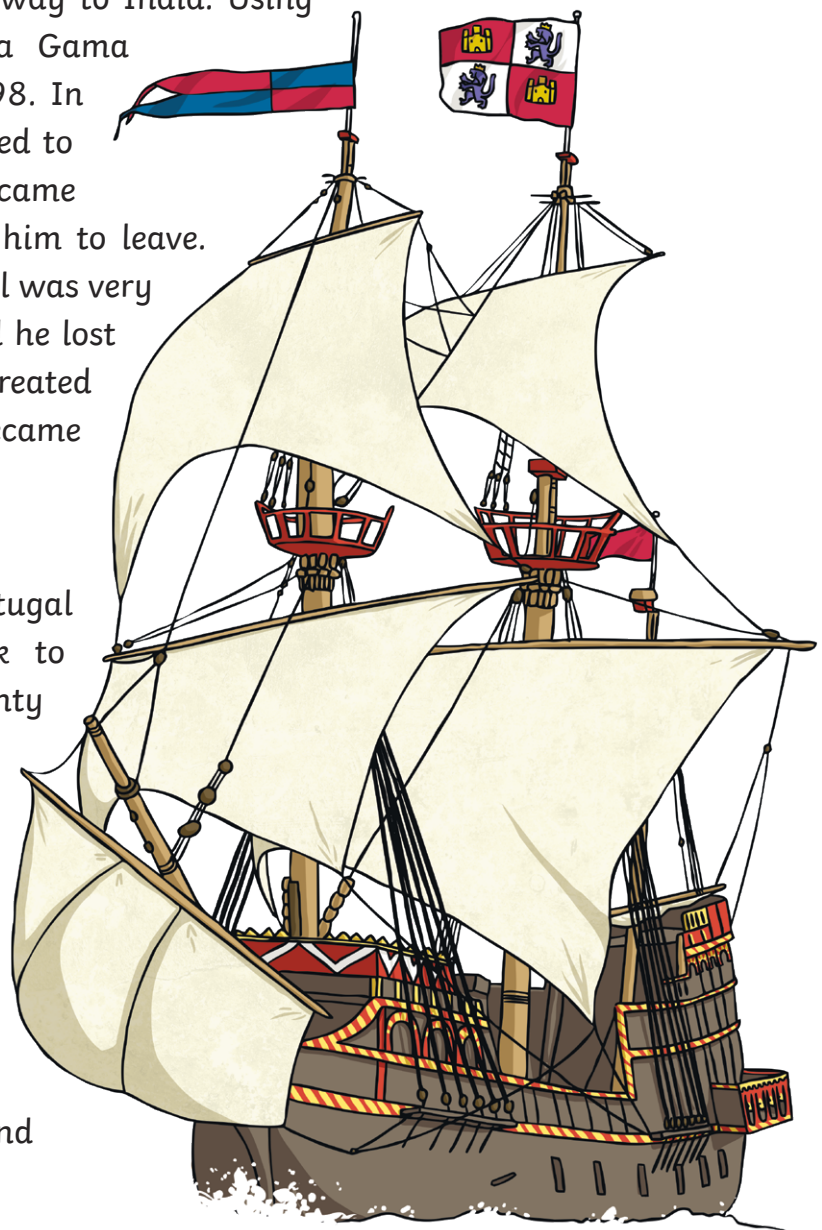
Vasco da Gama was born in 1460. He was from a rich family in Portugal. His father was a famous explorer. As a boy, he learnt about navigation and maths. In Portugal, everybody wanted spices from India. However, they were very expensive because they had to be brought overland – this was a very long and dangerous journey. The King of Portugal wanted to find a faster way to reach India by sea. He decided to ask Vasco da Gama to do this.

First Voyage

In 1497, Vasco da Gama set sail from Portugal. He had four ships and 170 crew. Due to strong winds and calm seas, he sailed around Africa and into the Indian Ocean. Not long after, he landed in modern-day Kenya. While he was there, he hired a man who knew the way to India. Using this man's skills, Vasco da Gama finally reached India in 1498. In India, Vasco da Gama wanted to buy spices but the Indians became angry with him and forced him to leave. The journey home to Portugal was very hard. Half the crew died and he lost two ships. However, he was treated like a hero in Portugal and became very rich and famous.

Second Voyage

In 1502, the King of Portugal sent Vasco da Gama back to India. This time he took twenty warships and 800 men! His task was to force the Indians to trade with Portugal and to stop Arab traders from getting the best supplies. He attacked Arab and Indian towns but had to go back to Portugal. This meant that his second voyage failed.



Third Voyage

Many years passed. Then in 1521, a new king came to the throne in Portugal. He asked Vasco da Gama to go back to India. This time, his mission was to replace the Portuguese governor there because he was doing a very bad job. In 1524, Vasco da Gama sailed to India with fourteen ships. The journey was difficult because he lost four or five ships. When he arrived in India, he replaced the old governor straight away. However, he soon became very sick and died on Christmas Eve that year.

His body was returned to Portugal and he was buried in a coffin covered in gold and jewels.

Did You Know...?

- Cities, suburbs, churches, town squares and shopping centres all over the world are named after him.
- In Brazil, there are three football teams named in his honour.
- Many books, poems and even an opera have been written about Vasco da Gama's life and voyages.
- There is even a crater on the moon called Vasco da Gama.



Questions

1. Was Vasco da Gama from a rich family or a poor family?

2. What was his father's job?

3. What did Vasco da Gama study at school?

4. What did Vasco da Gama bring back from India?

5. Why did Vasco da Gama have to replace the Portuguese governor in India?

6. True or false? The journey back from India was very difficult.

7. When did Vasco da Gama die?

8. List at least two things named after Vasco da Gama.

Answers

1. Was Vasco da Gama from a rich family or a poor family?
Vasco da Gama was from a rich family.
2. What was his father's job?
His father was a famous explorer.
3. What did Vasco da Gama study at school?
Vasco da Gama studied navigation and mathematics at school.
4. What did Vasco da Gama bring back from India?
Vasco da Gama brought back spices from India.
5. Why did Vasco da Gama have to replace the Portuguese governor in India?
Vasco da Gama had to replace the Portuguese governor in India because he was doing a very bad job.
6. True or false? The journey back from India was very difficult.
True
7. When did Vasco da Gama die?
Vasco da Gama died on Christmas Eve, 1524.
8. List at least two things named after Vasco da Gama.
Accept any two from the following: Cities, suburbs, churches, town squares and shopping centres all over the world are named after him; in Brazil, there are three football teams named in his honour; many books, poems and even an opera have been written about Vasco da Gama's life and voyages; and there is even a crater on the moon called Vasco da Gama.

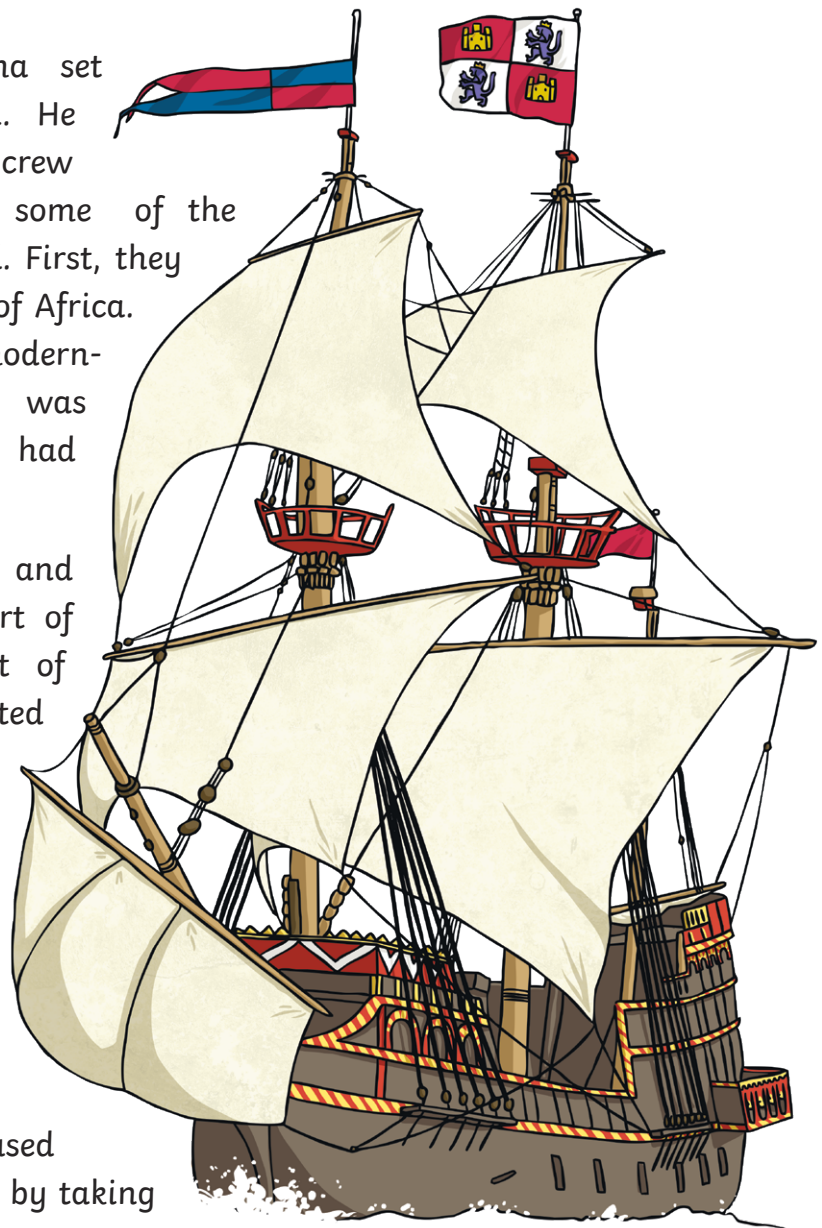
Vasco da Gama

Vasco da Gama was born in 1460 and he was born into a wealthy family. His father was also an explorer but little is known about his mother. As a young man, he studied navigation and mathematics. In the 15th century, spices, such as pepper and ginger from India, were in high demand. However, traders had to travel there by land, which was very expensive, dangerous and time-consuming. To satisfy this demand and to make lots of money, Portugal sent explorers to find a sea route to India in order to make trade faster, cheaper and easier. To achieve this goal, the King of Portugal gave the job to a young and ambitious sea captain called Vasco da Gama.

First Voyage

In 1497, Vasco da Gama set sail from Lisbon, Portugal. He took four ships and 170 crew members, which included some of the best navigators in the world. First, they sailed down the west coast of Africa. Before long, they reached modern-day South Africa, which was farther than any explorer had travelled before at that time.

In 1498, Vasco da Gama and his men sailed into the port of Calicut on the west coast of India. He immediately started to purchase Indian spices. At first, Vasco da Gama was treated kindly by the Indians and he received a warm welcome. However, before long, the Indians demanded that he return home and leave everything he had traded behind. He refused and only managed to escape by taking hostages.



The journey home to Portugal was terrible. Not only did they have to battle difficult winds, but many sailors suffered from scurvy, a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C. Eventually, Vasco da Gama's fleet limped back to Portugal in 1499. Despite all this, the voyage was considered a great success and it was the longest sea journey by a European explorer at that time. Furthermore, the precious cargo he brought back was worth sixty times the cost of the expedition. Vasco da Gama himself was treated like a hero and the King of Portugal made him an admiral.

Second Voyage

In 1502, the King of Portugal sent Vasco da Gama back to India. This time, however, he went with twenty heavily armed ships and 800 men! His mission was to force open the India markets to Portuguese trade and to prevent Arab traders from purchasing the best spice supplies. Because he failed to open a trade route to India, the voyage was considered to have been unsuccessful.

Third Voyage

In 1521, a new king came to the throne in Portugal. By then, Portugal had set up several colonies in India but the governor was very corrupt. Because of his famous name and reputation, the King of Portugal asked Vasco da Gama to go to India to replace the governor. In 1524, Vasco da Gama set sail once more for India. This time he took fourteen ships. Once again, it was a difficult journey as four or five ships were lost on the way. Nonetheless, Vasco da Gama arrived in India later that year and immediately removed

Did You Know...?

- Cities, suburbs, churches, town squares and shopping centres all over the world are named after Vasco da Gama.
- In Brazil, there are three football teams named in his honour.
- Many books, poems and even an opera have been written about Vasco da Gama's life and voyages.
- There is even a crater on the moon called Vasco da Gama!



the Portuguese governor.

Within a few months of his arrival, Vasco da Gama caught the disease malaria. He died on Christmas Eve, 1524. His body was eventually returned to Portugal in 1538, where he was buried in a coffin decorated with gold and jewels.



Questions

1. What subjects did Vasco da Gama study as a young man?

2. What job did Vasco da Gama's father do?

3. Why did Portugal want to find a sea route to Asia?

4. Why do you think the overland route was 'expensive, dangerous and time-consuming'?

5. Many of Vasco da Gama's crew died from scurvy. What causes scurvy?

6. In your opinion, how might the Indians have felt about Vasco da Gama and the Portuguese?

7. What disease did Vasco da Gama die from?

8. In your opinion, what was Vasco da Gama's greatest achievement?

9. List at least three ways Vasco da Gama is remembered today.

Answers

1. What subjects did Vasco da Gama study as a young man?
He studied navigation and mathematics at school.
2. What job did Vasco da Gama's father do?
His father was an explorer.
3. Why did Portugal want to find a sea route to Asia?
Portugal wanted to find a sea route to Asia so it would become wealthy by trading for spices and other Indian goods.
4. Why do you think the overland route was 'expensive, dangerous and time-consuming'?
Answers will vary, for example: The route was 'expensive, dangerous and time-consuming' because goods could be stolen during the route. It was time-consuming because it took a long time, and it was expensive because it would cost a lot of money to prepare.
5. Many of Vasco da Gama's crew died from scurvy. What causes scurvy?
Scurvy is a serious disease caused by a lack of vitamin C.
6. In your opinion, how might the Indians have felt about Vasco da Gama and the Portuguese?
Answers will vary.
7. What disease did Vasco da Gama die from?
Vasco da Gama died from malaria.
8. In your opinion, what was Vasco da Gama's greatest achievement?
Answers will vary, for example: Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route from Europe to India.
9. List at least three ways Vasco da Gama is remembered today.
Accept any three from the following: Vasco da Gama is remembered in books; poems; opera; names of cities, suburbs, churches, town squares and shopping centres; names of football teams; and a crater on the Moon.

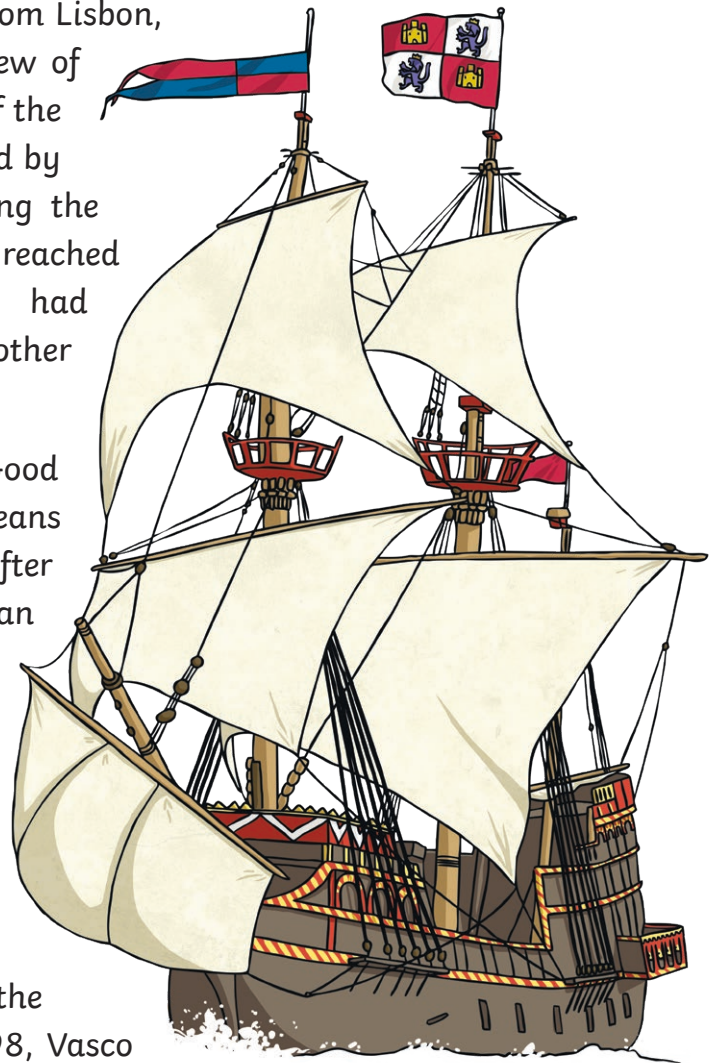
Vasco da Gama

Vasco da Gama was born in 1460 to an affluent family in Sines, a Portuguese town south of Lisbon. His father was a sailor but little is known about his mother. As a young man, he studied navigation and mathematics. In the 1490s, Portugal desperately wanted to secure a sea passage to India. Up to that time, all trade with India was completed overland, which was very expensive, dangerous and time consuming. The insatiable demand for Indian spices, such as ginger, cinnamon and pepper, and the potential to make massive profits persuaded the King of Portugal to hire Vasco da Gama. His task was to explore a potential sea route to India via the southernmost tip of Africa. Vasco da Gama had already proven himself to be a very competent sea captain by daringly capturing a fleet of French ships. Several explorers had already tried and failed to make the journey. Now this seemingly impossible task fell to Vasco da Gama.

First Voyage

In 1497, Vasco da Gama set sail from Lisbon, Portugal with four ships and a crew of 170 people, which included some of the best navigators in the world. Helped by favourable winds, they sailed along the coast of Africa. By the time they reached modern-day South Africa, they had already travelled farther than any other European explorer at that time.

When they rounded the Cape of Good Hope, they became the first Europeans to sail into the Indian Ocean. After receiving some hostility from African kingdoms and Arab traders, who were resistant to the Portuguese interfering in their trade routes, they reached Malindi, located in modern-day Kenya. While he was moored here, da Gama hired a local navigator, whose knowledge of the monsoon winds enabled the party to reach India safely. In 1498, Vasco



da Gama and his men reached the port of Calicut on the west coast of India.

Vasco da Gama immediately began to carry out the aim of the voyage: to purchase spices for the Portuguese market. Initially, he was treated as an honoured guest; however, before long, the Indian rulers became wary of the Portuguese contingent and they asked them to return home. When he attempted to leave, the Indians forced him to leave all the goods he had traded. He refused and only managed to get away by taking hostages.

Did You Know...?

Vasco da Gama's legacy is noticeable in many different areas:

- Cities, suburbs, churches, town squares and shopping centres all over the world are named after him.
- In Brazil, there are three football teams named in his honour.
- An opera – 'L'Africaine' by Giancorno Meyerbeer – was composed about the life of Vasco da Gama.
- There is even a crater on the moon called Vasco da Gama.



The journey home to Portugal was affected by two disastrous factors: unfavourable winds and scurvy (a serious disease caused by a lack of vitamin C). With a much depleted crew (over 100 members had died) and two ships destroyed, da Gama's fleet eventually limped back to Portugal in 1499. Despite all this, the voyage was considered a great success; da Gama was hailed as a hero. Furthermore, the precious cargo he brought back was worth sixty times the cost of the expedition. The King of Portugal gave him a special title: 'Admiral of the Seas of Arabia, Persia, India and All Orients'. He had accomplished a sensational achievement: he had discovered a sea route to the prosperous markets of India.

Second Voyage

In 1502, the Portuguese king sent Vasco da Gama back to India once again. This time, however, he went with twenty heavily armed ships and greater manpower – he had a force of 800 men. His mission was to create a trade route between

Portugal and India so that Portuguese traders could profit from the spice trade. After an attempt to disrupt Arab traders in India failed, Vasco da Gama was forced to return to Portugal in 1503. When he returned to Portugal, he soon fell out of favour with the King of Portugal. His life between the end of the second voyage and the beginning of the third voyage is obscure.

Third Voyage

In 1521, a new King of Portugal ascended the throne and Vasco da Gama found himself back in favour with the royal court. Before long, the new king asked Vasco da Gama to sail to India and replace the governor of Portuguese territories because he was considered to be corrupt and incompetent. In 1524, he set sail once more for India with fourteen ships. Once again, the journey to India was particularly treacherous as four or five ships were lost en route. Nonetheless, Vasco da Gama arrived in India later that year and immediately replaced the governor and all his officials.

Within a matter of months, Vasco da Gama contracted malaria and he died on Christmas Eve, 1524, in the Indian city of Cochin. His body was eventually returned to Portugal, where he was buried in an ornate coffin, decorated with gold and jewels.



Questions

1. What subjects did Vasco da Gama study as a young man?

2. How might his studies have helped his work as an explorer later in life?

3. Why did Portugal want to find a sea route to Asia?

4. Why was Vasco da Gama considered a hero on his return from his first voyage?

5. In your opinion, why was Vasco da Gama's second voyage to India a failure?

6. Why was there such a delay between the second and third voyage?

7. In your opinion, why was Vasco da Gama asked to replace the governor in India?

8. Which disease caused Vasco da Gama's death?

9. What was Vasco da Gama's greatest achievement?

10. List at least three ways Vasco da Gama is remembered today.

Answers

1. What subjects did Vasco da Gama study as a young man?
Vasco da Gama studied navigation and mathematics as a young man.
2. How might his studies have helped his work as an explorer later in life?
Answers will vary, for example: Navigation and mathematics would have helped him to plan his voyage and to find the way to India.
3. Why did Portugal want to find a sea route to Asia?
Portugal wanted to become wealthy by purchasing spices and other Indian goods. Up to that time, all trade with India was completed overland, which was very expensive, dangerous and time-consuming.
4. Why was Vasco da Gama considered a hero on his return from his first voyage?
Vasco da Gama was considered a hero because he had discovered a passage to India via the southernmost tip of Africa and the spices he returned with were worth sixty times the cost of the expedition.
5. In your opinion, why was Vasco da Gama's second voyage to India a failure?
Various answers: Vasco da Gama's second voyage failed because he was not able to disrupt Arab traders.
6. Why was there such a delay between the second and third voyage?
There was a delay because he fell out of favour with the King of Portugal.
7. In your opinion, why was Vasco da Gama asked to replace the governor in India?
Various answers, for example: Vasco da Gama replaced the new governor because he found favour with the new King of Portugal and he had experience working in India.
8. Which disease caused Vasco da Gama's death?
Malaria caused Vasco da Gama to die.
9. What was Vasco da Gama's greatest achievement?
Answers will vary, for example: His greatest achievement was discovering the sea route from Europe to India, which allowed Portugal to become a powerful nation.
10. List at least three ways Vasco da Gama is remembered today.
Accept any three from the following: Vasco da Gama is remembered today as cities, suburbs, churches, town squares and shopping centres all over the world are named after him; in Brazil, there are three football teams named in his honour; an opera – 'L'Africaine' by Giancorno Meyerbeer – was composed about his life; and there is even a crater on the Moon called Vasco da Gama.