

John Cabot



John Cabot was born in Italy in 1450 with the given name Giovanni Caboto. Like Christopher Columbus, another early explorer who came from Italy but traveled the world for Spain, John Cabot sailed under a British flag. Even today, all ships must fly the flag of the country where the ship is registered while the ship is at sea. Since John Cabot's journey was financed by the King of England and he was exploring for England, he was "sailing under a British flag."

Italian Caboto first tried to convince the Spanish and Portuguese kings that he was the one to find a route to the Indies in search of spices, gold and other treasures by sailing west. But instead of sailing straight west across the Atlantic Ocean or first sailing southwest to follow the coast of Africa, Caboto proposed using a northerly route which would be shorter due to the shape of the earth.

Caboto could not convince the kings of Spain or Portugal to finance his journey but instead found support from King Henry VII of England. Caboto is known to us under the English version of his name, John Cabot. His first voyage took him to Iceland but his second voyage in 1497 brought him to the shores of what is today the coast of Canada in North America. He possibly landed in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia.

However, Cabot returned to England without finding the riches he had been looking for. In 1498 he set sail again with five ships in search of a new route to the Indies. Cabot and his ships never returned and we assume that they were lost at sea. No one ever heard from Cabot again.

Remember that Columbus was born in Italy in 1451 and traveled to the area around Cuba flying the Spanish flag in 1492. It wasn't until 1498 that Columbus reached the continent of South America. We could possibly debate whether Columbus or Cabot was the first European since the Vikings to set foot on an American continent; Columbus landed in South America in 1498 and Cabot landed in North America in 1497.

Name: _____

Date: _____

John Cabot Graphic Organizer

Who	What	When



Where	Why	How

Name: _____

Date: _____

John Cabot Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Where were both Columbus and Cabot born?
 - a. Italy
 - b. Spain
 - c. Portugal

2. Cabot tried unsuccessfully to convince the kings of what countries to finance his exploration?
 - a. Italy and Spain
 - b. Spain and Portugal
 - c. Portugal and England

3. Which country financed his voyage?
 - a. Spain
 - b. Portugal
 - c. England

4. After crossing the Atlantic Ocean, what continent did Cabot reach?
 - a. North America
 - b. South America
 - c. Antarctica

5. Cabot was looking for a route to the Indies by sailing in what part of the Atlantic Ocean?
 - a. North Atlantic
 - b. Mid-Atlantic
 - c. South Atlantic

Name: _____

Date: _____

John Cabot Short Answer Questions

1. Why do you think Giovanni Caboto changed his name to John Cabot? Do you know anyone else who has changed their name? Why did he or she change it?
2. Like John Cabot, Christopher Columbus was born in Italy. Columbus sailed for the King and Queen of Spain. What country's flag was on Columbus' ships? Why?
3. What was John Cabot looking for on his journey?
4. Would you have traveled with Cabot? Explain why or why not.
5. Why was Cabot's proposed northerly route across the Atlantic Ocean better than the route Columbus took across the middle of the Atlantic Ocean?
6. Who do think should be given the credit for "discovering America" – the Vikings, Columbus or John Cabot? Why?
7. Today we keep in touch with friends, family and the people we work with by cell phones and e-mail messages and we know where we are in the world by using a GPS device. Compare this technology with the navigational tools Cabot had.
8. What could have happened to Cabot that would have made five ships disappear and never be heard from again?

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Answer Key

Multiple Choice

1. a.
2. b.
3. c.
4. a.
5. a.

Short Answer Questions

1. To make it sound English since he was working for the King of England. Some movie and rock stars change their names so they are easy to remember.
2. Spain. A ship flies the flag of the country it comes from.
3. Spices, gold and other treasures.
4. Individual response.
5. Due to the shape of the earth, traveling a northern route closer to the pole is shorter than traveling across the middle. Today Airplanes fly polar routes when traveling from one continent to another.
6. Individual response.
7. Cabot and the other explorers didn't have any of this technology. They traveled by following the coast of a continent and navigating by the position of the stars.
8. Individual response. Consider violent storm, illness, crash on a reef.