Ferdinand Magellan

Ferdinand Magellan is another explorer, mariner and navigator who was born in Portugal, in 1480. Magellan first served the Portuguese King Manuel and spent eight years exploring the coast of Africa and the Portuguese Indies. After all his efforts including being wounded and disabled, the king dismissed him from service.

Meanwhile, European rulers and traders continued to seek out spices from the Indies, a valuable product that would not grow in the European climate. Explorers were continuous looking for better routes to the other side of the world. Magellan was aware of the possibility of a strait, or small opening in the sea, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean in South America. We now know there is no such opening; the Panama Canal was built in 1914 to provide this connection.

Since Magellan had a great deal of valuable experience with navigating unknown seas, he easily convinced the 17-year old King Charles I of Spain to finance his venture. In 1519, Magellan set out sailing west for the Indies with five ships, looking for the strait to the Pacific Ocean. After crossing the Atlantic Ocean, Magellan and his fleet did reach the coast of South America where Brazil is today. Ironically, Magellan reached the widest part of South America instead of the narrowest. Realizing there was no way to sail to the Pacific Ocean there, Magellan turned south to follow the coast of South America.

Today we know that Antarctica is the continent at the southern pole of the world. Unfortunately, Magellan was exploring southward during the South American winter, traveling into colder regions. After great hardship in the frigid climate, Magellan’s fleet finally sailed around the southern tip of South America into the Pacific Ocean; the Strait of Magellan still bears his name today.

Magellan died in 1521 on one of the islands in the middle of the Pacific. His sailors did reach the Indies and returned to Spain by sailing around Africa. They traveled completely around the world by sea; they were the first to circumnavigate (circle) the world. Even though Magellan died en route, he is credited with the successful voyage.
## Ferdinand Magellan Graphic Organizer

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Ferdinand Magellan

Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Where was Magellan born?
   a. Italy
   b. Spain
   c. Portugal

2. Where did Magellan sail from on his famous journey?
   a. Italy
   b. Spain
   c. China

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

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

5. Magellan died on an island in which ocean?
   a. Atlantic Ocean
   b. Pacific Ocean
   c. Indian Ocean

6. Circumnavigate means
   a. The distance around a circle
   b. The earth travels around the sun
   c. Sail around the world
Ferdinand Magellan

**Short Answer Questions**

1. How do you think Magellan felt about being dismissed by the King of Portugal? Was he right in switching his loyalty to the King of Spain? Explain why or why not.

2. Why were spices so important to Europeans?

3. Would you have traveled with Magellan? Explain why or why not.

4. Since Magellan died on the voyage, do you think he deserves the credit in history as the first explorer to circumnavigate the world? Explain why or why not.

5. According to the dictionary, a strait is defined as “a narrow stretch of water between two land masses.” Magellan sailed between the continents of South America and Antarctica which are separated by ocean. Look at a map and explain why the term “strait” applies.

6. What do you think would have happened if Magellan had sailed north when he reached Brazil instead of sailing south?

7. John Glenn was the first American to orbit the earth in a space capsule. Do you think he deserves the same place in history as Magellan? Explain why or why not.
Ferdinand Magellan

Answer Key

Multiple Choice

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

Short Answer Questions

1. Individual response.
2. Spices would not grow in the cold climate of Europe.
3. Individual response.
4. Individual response.
5. Magellan sailed between South America and the island of Tierra del Fuego. There is a narrow passage between South America and the island.