



History & Geography

In this session, we have included mini biographies of **ten notable Age of Exploration explorers!**

Your family may also enjoy reading *The World of Columbus and Sons*, by Genevieve Foster. [Here](#) is a free version, and [here](#) is a link to Amazon to purchase your own copy. There are five sections which you can spread over the next five (or six) weeks.

We have also included maps from between the 15th and 17th centuries, as well as some created before the Age of Exploration to amuse your family! Compare and contrast them to a modern world map.

Those new regions which we found and explored with the fleet... we may rightly call a New World... a continent more densely peopled and abounding in animals than our Europe or Asia or Africa; and, in addition, a climate milder than in any other region known to us."

~ Amerigo Vespucci

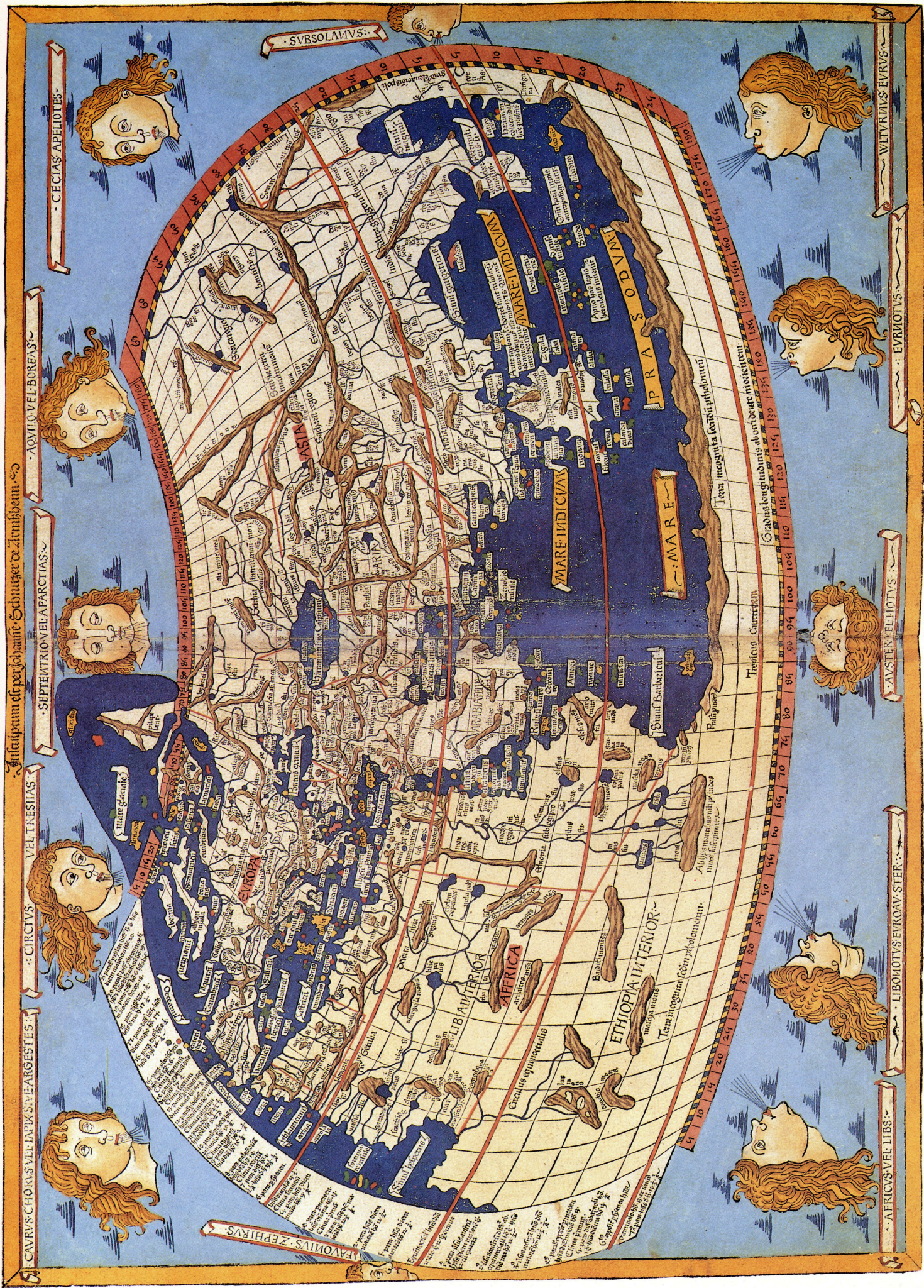
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Age of Exploration Era Explorers

- **Christopher Columbus** was an Italian sailor who dreamed of finding a new sea route to Asia by sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean. In 1492, with the support of Spain, he set out on a daring voyage that led him to islands in the Caribbean, though he believed he had reached the edges of Asia. On later voyages, he would subsequently explore the coasts of Central and South America. Columbus's journeys connected Europe and the Americas in lasting ways, opening the door to new exploration, trade, and encounters between different cultures.
- **Amerigo Vespucci** was an Italian explorer and navigator who helped people understand that the lands discovered across the Atlantic were part of a new continent, not Asia, declaring them a "New World." He helped fund Columbus's first voyage, and through his own voyages along the coasts of South America, Vespucci carefully observed the land, stars, and seas, sharing his findings through letters that were widely read in Europe. Because of these accomplishments, mapmakers later named the new continents the Americas in his honor.
- **Ferdinand Magellan** was a Portuguese explorer who sailed for Spain and led the first expedition to ever travel around the world. In 1519, he set out to find a western sea route to Asia, bravely navigating unknown waters and discovering the narrow passage at the southern tip of South America now called the Strait of Magellan. Although Magellan did not survive the entire journey, his expedition proved that the Earth could be circled by sea and showed just how vast the oceans truly are. His story reflects determination, courage, and a spirit of adventure that shaped early exploration.
- **Sir Francis Drake** was an English sailor and explorer who became famous for sailing around the world on one expedition. He was only the second person to have done so, proving that it could be done again. In the late 1500s, he led a daring voyage that took him across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, making him the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe. Drake was known for his skill at sea and his bold adventures, which helped England grow stronger as a naval power.

- **Hernán Cortés** was a Spanish explorer who is best known for leading an expedition to Mexico in the early 1500s. In 1519, he arrived on the mainland and eventually reached the great Aztec city of Tenochtitlán, where he encountered a highly organized and powerful civilization. Early in the journey, Cortés made a bold and risky decision to scuttle, or destroy, his ships so that his men could not return to Spain. This action showed his determination and forced the expedition to move forward, no matter the danger. Through war, alliances, conflict, and perseverance, Cortés helped bring the Aztec Empire under Spanish control, which greatly changed life in the region. This journey played a major role in connecting Europe with the Americas, for better and for worse, and it created a new era on both sides of the ocean.
- **Juan Ponce de León** was a Spanish explorer who took part in early voyages to the Americas, including Christopher Columbus's second journey. He helped establish Spanish settlements in the Caribbean, like Puerto Rico, where he served as an early governor. In 1513, he sailed north and became one of the first Europeans to explore Florida, naming the land and claiming it for Spain. Ponce de León is often remembered for the legend of the Fountain of Youth, as in some tales, he was searching for it in Florida, though his real goals focused on exploration, land, and opportunity. His journeys helped expand European knowledge of the southeastern regions of North America.
- **John Cabot** was an Italian explorer who sailed for England and helped expand European knowledge of the North Atlantic. In 1497, he crossed the Atlantic Ocean and reached the coast of North America, likely landing in present-day Canada. Cabot was searching for a shorter route to Asia, but his voyage instead opened the way for future English exploration and fishing settlements. His journey played an important role in England's early claims in the New World and helped shape later exploration along the Atlantic coast.
- **Henry Hudson** was an English explorer who searched for a shorter sea route to Asia. In the early 1600s, he made several dangerous voyages through icy northern waters, exploring parts of present-day Canada and sailing up the river that now bears his name, the Hudson River. Although he never found the route he was looking for, Hudson's journeys helped map important waterways and coastlines in North America. His explorations later supported trade, settlement, and further exploration in the region.

- **Francisco Coronado** was a Spanish explorer who led a major expedition into the southwestern parts of North America. In the early 1540s, he traveled through areas that are now Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas while searching for the rumored Seven Cities of Gold. Although he did not find the riches he hoped for, Coronado's journey greatly increased European knowledge of the land, people, animals, and geography of the region. He was the first European explorer to discover the Grand Canyon, as well as the Colorado River. His expedition marked one of the earliest European explorations of the American Southwest.
- **Hernando de Soto** was a Spanish explorer who took part in several major expeditions in the Americas. In the 1530s and 1540s, he led a long journey through the southeastern regions of North America, exploring areas that are now Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, and the Carolinas. De Soto is often remembered as the first European to lead an expedition that reached the Mississippi River, and though he died on the expedition, his name was written into history through his explorations. His travels brought Europeans into contact with many Native American cultures and helped expand maps and knowledge of the region.



A printed map created by Johannes Schnitzer in 1482, depicting Ptolemy's description of the inhabited world.



Another early map depicting Ptolemy's description of the inhabited world. (Artist unknown)



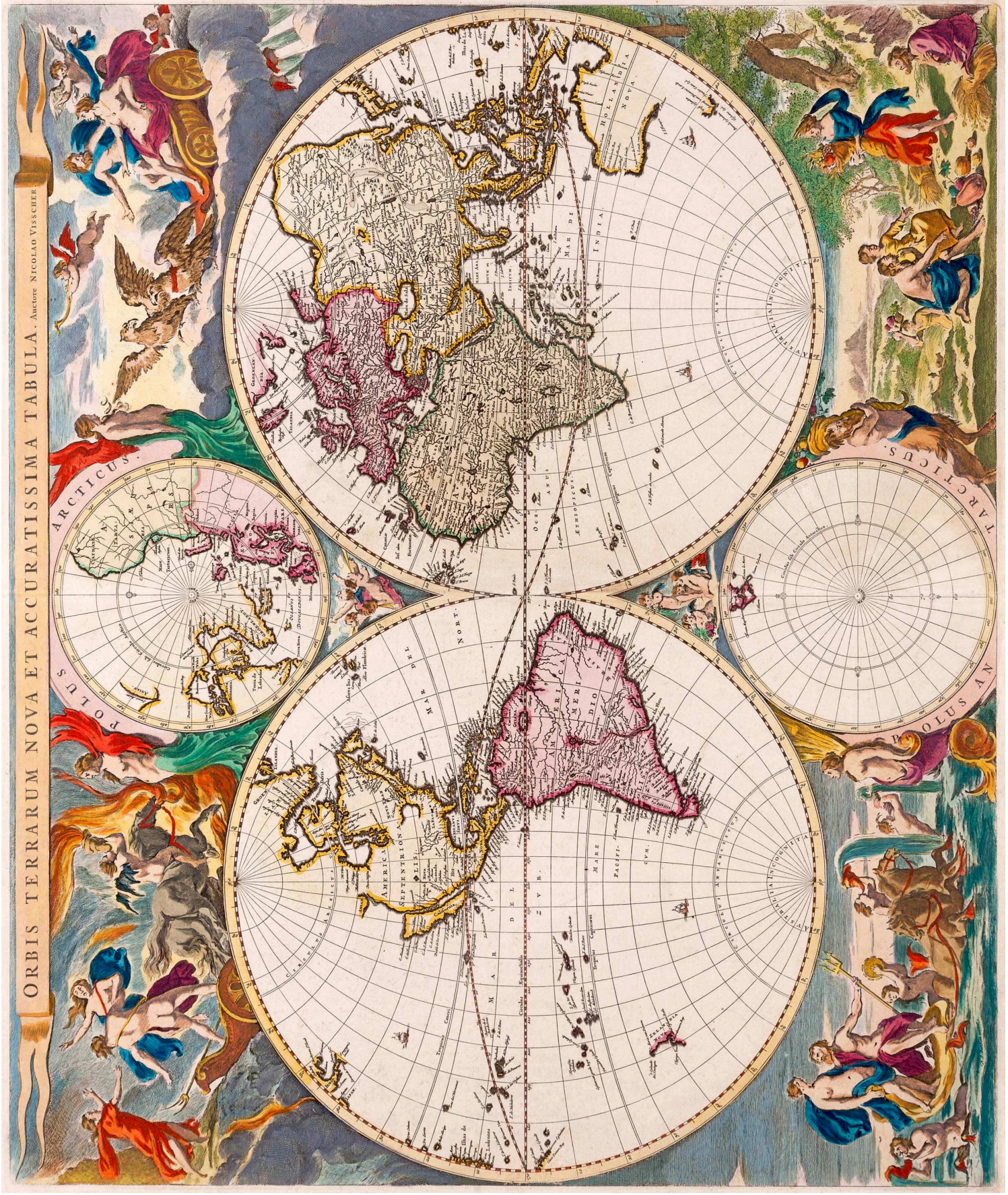
Carta Marina, by Olaus Magnus, 1539



TYPVS ORBIS TERRARVM

QVID EI POTEST VIDERI MAGNUM IN REBVS HVMANIS, CVI AETERNITAS OMNIS, TOTIVSQUE MVNDI NOTA SIT MAGNITVDO. CICERO:

Typus Orbis Terrarum "Representation of the World," Abraham Ortelius, 1572.



Orbis Terrarum Nova et Accuratissima Tabula "New and Very Accurate Map of the World," Nicolaes Visscher, 1658