

Bold Explorers

The world is a big place. That doesn't come as a surprise to you and me. All of our lives we've had maps that show us where we are compared with every single nation on earth. We can count the time zones and know what time it is in a country on the opposite side of the world. We can even look at online maps and webcams and see what is happening a hundred or a thousand miles away.

But have you ever stopped to think about the men and women who have made all that knowledge possible? Explorers, cartographers, and record keepers who left everything familiar and set off to discover something new? Maybe it was a continent. Maybe it was a hidden treasure. Maybe it was a lost city or a mythical land. Sometimes it was simply to know what lay beyond what was known at the time.

They didn't have satellites, cell phones, or GPS. Many [explorers](#) spent their lives looking for new lands and challenging themselves in ways that most of us can only dream of. Some of them never returned. But because of the ones who did and the ones who recorded their stories, trade routes were formed, lands were settled, nations were founded, and the Gospel was preached.

We're going to look at the stories of some of these explorers and record keepers. We'll talk about a few of the famous ones you've heard of like Lewis and Clark and Neil Armstrong, but we'll spend most of our time discussing some you may not know about such as Antonio Alaminos, Fabian von Bellingshausen, Jacob Roggeveen, and Francisco Xeres.

Like all of us, these men did both honorable and dishonorable things. Some of them ended up hurting the people they met or even tried to help. But whatever the reason for their exploration, we can all learn from their examples of courage and enthusiasm.

Before we get started, keep in mind one important thing. There is still more exploring to be done. There are still hidden places, forgotten lands, and lost peoples. There are languages to be translated, cultures to be discovered, and stories to be recorded. Is there something God is calling you to discover?

Note to Parents

Bold Explorers looks at the lives of more than thirty explorers and is divided into thirty-five short readings. Each section includes the name of the explorer, the name of the nation that sent him out, and a summary of his accomplishments. Most sections end with a writing or research prompt for further study; a few include hyperlinks for more information or a hands-on activity. At the conclusion of the unit, you will find an additional hands-on activity, a fill-in-the-blank worksheet, and a multiple choice quiz.

You are encouraged to use this unit however it fits best with your family's schedule. You can work through it in a few days or divide it over the course of several weeks (such as doing one section a day for seven weeks).

Here is a list of the explorers covered in this unit and their accomplishments:

- Antonio Alaminos: Discovered the Gulf Stream
- Fabian von Bellingshausen: Circumnavigated Antarctica
- Pedro da Covilha: Traveled the Indian Ocean and Eastern Ports
- Neil Armstrong: First Man on the Moon
- Semyon Dezhnev: Discovered the Bering Strait
- Edward John Eyre: First East-West Transcontinental Crossing of Australia
- Percy Harrison Fawcett: Explored Bolivia and the Jungles of Brazil
- John Smith: Founded Jamestown, Virginia
- Marie Joseph Garnier: Explored Southeast Asia
- Sven Hedin: Explored Central Asia
- John and Sebastian Cabot: Explored the New World
- Alejandro Malaspina: Explored for Knowledge
- Matthew Perry: Journey to Japan
- Samuel de Champlain: Founded the City of Quebec
- Jakob Le Maire: Explored Trade Routes
- Robert John McClure: Northwest Passage
- Gustav Nachtigal: Explored the Sahara
- Francisco de Orellana: Amazon River
- Meriwether Lewis and William Clark: Headed West
- Vincente Yáñez Pinzón: Central America and Parts of Brazil
- Pedro de Quirós: Vanuatu and the South Pacific
- Jacob Roggeveen: Easter Island
- Georg August Schweinfurth: Upper Nile River
- James Cook: Australia
- Jacques-Yves Cousteau: Ocean Depths
- Abel Janszoon Tasman: Tasmania
- Ferdinand Magellan: Circumnavigation of the Globe
- Francisco de Ulloa: Gulf of California
- George Vancouver: Pacific Coast of North America

- Christopher Columbus: New World Exploration
- Samuel Wallis: Tahiti
- Francisco Xeres: The History of Pizarro
- Yermak Timofeyevich: Siberia
- Edwin Eugene “Buzz” Aldrin: Landed on the Moon
- David Livingstone: The Heart of Africa and Her People

SAMPLE

Antonio Alaminos: Discovered the Gulf Stream

Spain

Antonio Alaminos was one of the most skilled navigators of his day. In 1513, his job was to pilot a boat for Ponce de Leon. As they attempted to travel south along the eastern coast of Florida, he encountered an ocean current so powerful that it pushed the boat backward in the opposite direction, despite the fact that the wind was in their favor.

But Antonio did more than simply observe this phenomenon. He remembered it and, six years later, put it to good use. This time he was on a journey northward from Mexico. He needed to sail northward along the coast of North America until it was time to turn and sail toward Europe. He remembered the strong current and purposely sailed into it. Allowing the powerful current to move him along, he made excellent time in his voyage. His discovery of the existence of the Gulf Stream, and his demonstration of how it could be used to a sailor's advantage, impacted travel and trade for centuries to come.

Chart the Gulf Stream on a map. What countries does it pass by? What are some of the ways it affects our lives today?

Fabian von Bellingshausen: Circumnavigated Antarctica

Estonia

Was there a continent at the southernmost end of the globe, and was it inhabitable? These were two of the questions Fabian von Bellingshausen set out to answer in 1819. Following in the footsteps of James Cook, whom he admired, Bellingshausen carried his exploration of the Antarctic region even further.

Over two years later, he would conclude his journey. In that time, he traveled back and forth from the Antarctic region to Australia and parts of the South Pacific. But the part of his journey that will always be remembered is his circumnavigation of the continent of Antarctica. He, and his extremely courageous and talented crew, traveled around the entire mainland. Sadly, however, he never realized that what he saw was actually the seventh continent. He saw icebergs but was not able to land and explore enough to determine that the ice he saw was indeed the mainland. By the time the records of his travels were published, there was some debate as to whether he had actually been the first man to see the Antarctic mainland.

Would you travel to Antarctica? Why or why not? If you would, what would you most like to see there?

Pedro da Covilha: Traveled the Indian Ocean and Eastern Ports Portugal

Pedro da Covilha was an explorer who was also a diplomat and a former spy. In the late 1400s, the ports along the Indian Ocean in eastern Africa, the Middle East, and India were known only to the Arab traders of the day. Pedro da Covilha changed all that.

The journey was full of danger. In addition to the usual hazards of ocean travel, Pedro also traveled disguised as an Arab (made possible by the fact that he spoke Arabic). However, discovery of his true identity could have meant death.

Pedro found many prosperous sea ports and marketplaces and established connections and trade routes that would serve Portugal in its future centuries of exploration.

Some of the ports Pedro visited include Sofala, Aden, Hormuz, Goa, and Calicut. What nations are these ports located in today? Are any of the cities known by a different name today?

Neil Armstrong: First Man on the Moon United States

[Neil Armstrong](#) was born August 5, 1930, in Wapakoneta, Ohio. When he was a child he was a member of the [Boy Scouts of America](#). Just like people you probably know (perhaps even your dad or older brother), Neil earned his Eagle Scout award while in the Boy Scouts.

He joined the [Navy](#) and became a “fully qualified” naval aviator. After leaving the Navy, he spent some time as an experimental research pilot. It seems to be a very natural step to go from test pilot to becoming an astronaut.

In 1962, Neil Armstrong put in his application to become an astronaut. On September 13, 1962, he was informed that he had been selected to be an astronaut with [NASA](#), assigned to work on the [Gemini 8](#) mission. He had a couple of missions between this and his infamous [Apollo 11](#) mission during which he was the first person to walk on the moon, on July 20, 1969. You may have heard his now famous line, “That’s one small step for man; one giant leap for mankind.” He announced that after the Apollo 11 mission he would not be returning to space.

Can you imagine what it would feel like to be on the [moon](#)? What would you do? What characteristics does the moon have? Pretend you are going on a trip to the moon. What will you pack? How will you prepare? What happens after you have landed on the [moon](#)? Write a paragraph describing how you feel, what you see, and what you plan to do during your trip to space.