

Name: _____ Date: _____

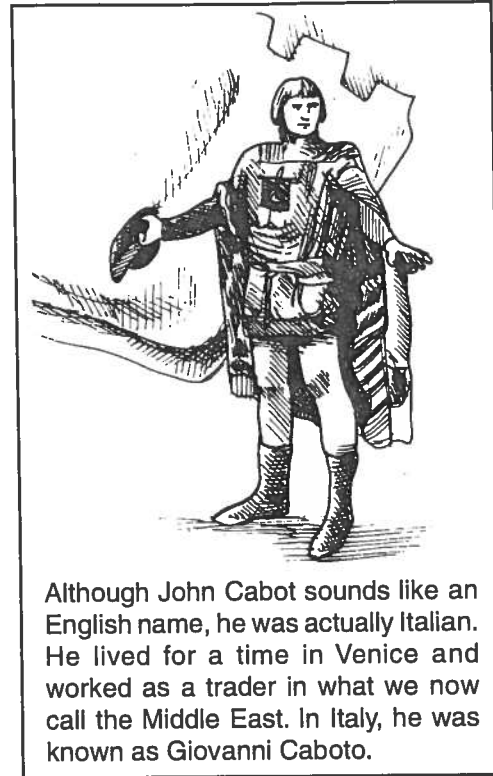
Meet John Cabot

Born: about 1450 in Genoa, Italy
 Died: 1499

John Cabot moved to England in 1484, seeking an opportunity to explore and obtain the fabulous riches of China. Like Columbus and others of his time, John Cabot thought there must be a sea route to the riches of Asia by sailing west instead of east.

After being turned down by merchants in Spain and Portugal, Cabot received a charter from Henry VII of England, giving him the right to discover new lands. The king provided only one small ship (less than 70 feet long) called the *Matthew* and a crew of 18. Cabot and his crew were forced to turn back during their first voyage in 1496 due to bad weather and lack of food.

Cabot sailed from England on a second voyage on May 2, 1497, taking a route much further to the north than Columbus had taken. On June 24, they sighted land somewhere in Newfoundland.



Although John Cabot sounds like an English name, he was actually Italian. He lived for a time in Venice and worked as a trader in what we now call the Middle East. In Italy, he was known as Giovanni Caboto.

1. Counting the day they left and the day they arrived, how many days did this voyage take?

Cabot, like Columbus, was convinced he had found an island off the coast of Asia and called it "new found land."

2. Do you think "Newfoundland" was a good name? Why or why not? _____

When he returned to England two months later, he didn't bring any riches, silk, or spices, but he had made a map of part of the North American coast. He also reported that one only had to lower a basket over the side of the boat, and it would be filled with fish. King Henry agreed to finance another voyage. Cabot's ship was joined by four other ships provided by merchants who hoped to cash in on what they thought was a new route to the Orient. They left in May, 1498. One of the merchant ships returned to England for repairs, but the other four, with John Cabot as captain, were never seen again.

Check It Out:

The Travels of John and Sebastian Cabot by Joanne Mattern
John Cabot and Son by David Goodnough

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A Charter From the King

Part of the charter granted to John Cabot by Henry VII reads as follows:

“Be known that we have given ... to John Cabot, citizen of Venice, and to Lewis, Sebastian and Sancio, sons of the said John ... full and free authority... to sail to all parts, regions and coasts of the eastern, western and northern sea ... to find, discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians.”

1. Summarize what you think King Henry meant in the first part of this charter. Use a dictionary if any of the words are unclear.

“John and his sons ... may conquer, occupy and possess whatsoever such towns, castles, cities and islands by them thus discovered ... as our vassals and governors ... acquiring for us the dominion, title and jurisdiction of the same [places] ... so discovered ... [All] gains and revenues accruing from this voyage ... [they] shall be bound [upon arriving in] our port of Bristol ... to pay to us, either in goods or money, the fifth part of the whole capital gained ... that they may bring back with them from those places newly discovered.”

2. According to this section of the charter, what percentage of the amount earned would be due to the king?

“And further we have granted ... that all mainlands, islands, towns, cities, castles and other places whatsoever discovered by them, however numerous they may happen to be, may not be frequented or visited by any other subjects of ours ... without the license of ... John and his sons ... on pain of loss as well of the ships or vessels daring to sail to these places discovered ...”

3. What rights does this section of the charter give to John Cabot?

4. If you had been John Cabot, would you have wanted to accept this charter from the king? Why or why not?
