

Exploring the Unknown



What if you were told the world is flat? Would you want to set sail into the unknown? Before many discoveries in the **Renaissance era** (1400-1600), Europeans were afraid to explore the unknown. Besides some people thinking the world was flat, others thought monsters lived in the ocean or the sun could boil the sea. In addition, ships were slow and maps weren't always correct. They didn't have GPS back then! There were many scary factors to consider if you wanted to set sail into the unknown. So, what made things change?

Europeans heard about the spices, gold, jewels, perfume, and silk in Asia, and began trading for them. Without spices, food was very bland. The Europeans also wanted more vegetables and fruit. People were contracting **scurvy**, a disease, because they didn't have enough vitamin C.

Then the Asian traders with these popular items started charging higher prices. Some traders made the prices so high that only the wealthy could afford to buy from them. To make matters worse, a series of religious wars broke out. **Constantinople** was captured in 1453, which cut off the trade routes between Europe and Asia by land. Europeans became desperate to find another way to trade. They wanted to find a western route to Asia. This meant they had to travel by water. The need for spices and other luxury items drove the age of exploration.

In order to prepare for exploration, Europeans knew they had work to do. New ships were built for the rough waters and long voyages. They were called **caravels**. **Cartographers** got busy on developing new maps. Compasses were invented to help with navigation. Monarchs were looking to invest in the best pioneers to explore new routes.

So, who would be the first explorer to find the water route? Bartolomeu Dias and Vasco da Gama from the small country of Portugal became the first explorers to set up sea trade routes. They went around the southern tip of Africa and into India! Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain and thought he was in India. However, he landed in the **New World**—the Americas. Although there were other explorers before Columbus, his travels gave other Europeans the motivation to explore. Superstitions about the boiling sea and sea monsters were a thing of the past. Their discoveries sparked a wave of interest to explore.

After the New World was discovered, exploration became rapid. The nation-states wanted to send explorers to discover new territories and routes. They also competed against each other for control of the New World. The expansion of international trade meant more wealth. The Renaissance era lasted for 200 years! There are many **sagas** being told about the brave people from long ago who trusted their fate and explored the world!

Picture of saga:

Meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

Picture of cartographer:

Meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

Picture of monarch:

Meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

Picture of navigation:

Meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

Picture of scurvy:

Meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

Picture of Renaissance:

Meaning: _____

Sentence: _____

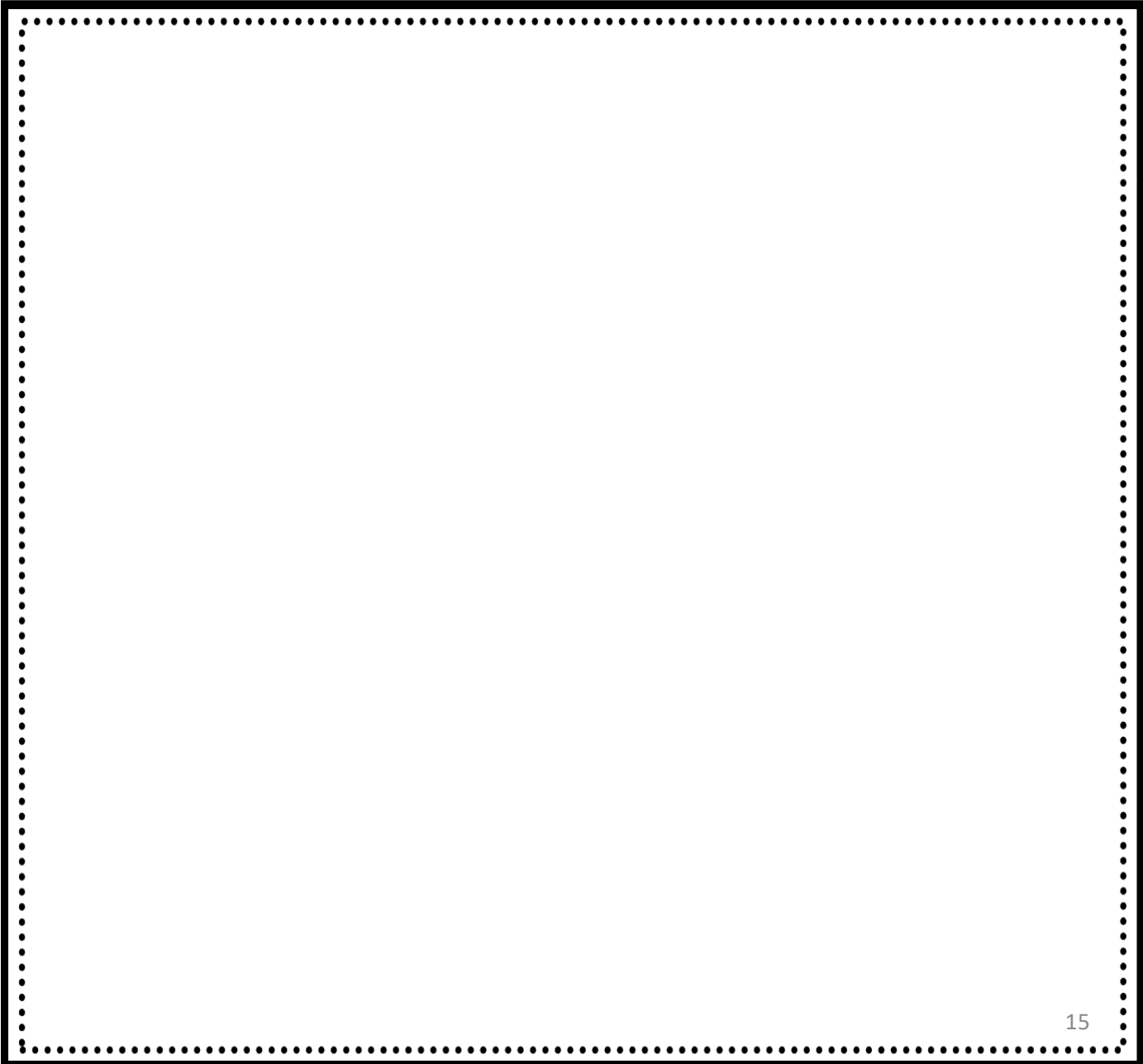
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EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN

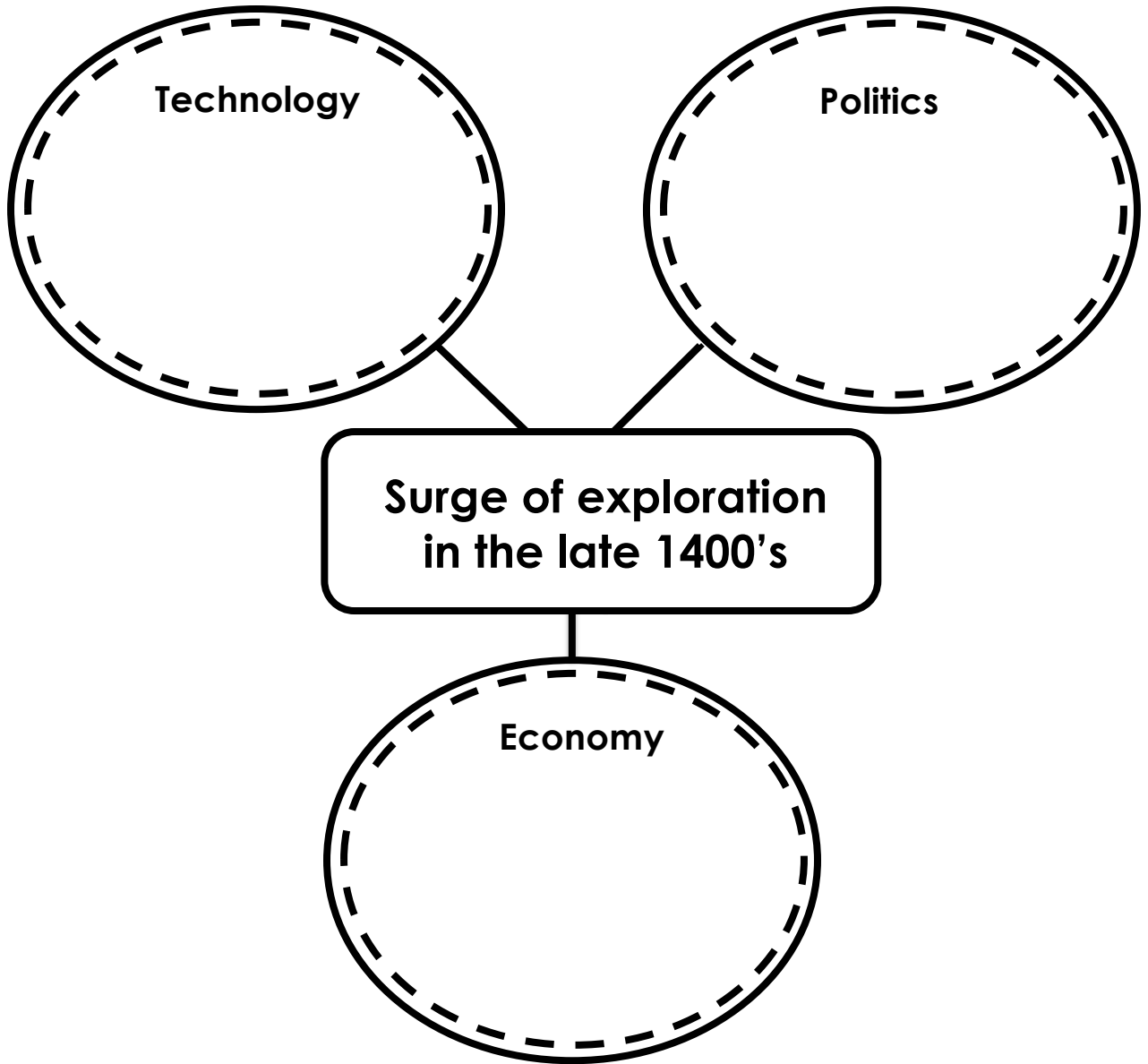
At first, Europeans didn't want to travel to the unknown lands because:

1. They thought the world was dangerous with sea monsters.
2. They thought the sun was so hot it would boil the sea.
3. Their ships were slow.
4. Lack of maps.
5. They didn't care to explore the unknown.

Choose one of the reasons. Create a sign using words and illustration(s). Be creative!!!!



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How did the capture of Constantinople (1453) encourage exploration?

Why did Europeans want to find better routes to Asia?
