Ferdinand Magellan

by Katie Clark

Ferdinand Magellan was an explorer from Portugal. He lived over five hundred years ago. He is credited with being the first European to sail completely around the globe—an amazing accomplishment!

Born around the year 1480, he grew up in a noble family. This meant his family was well off, or rich. In his twenties, he enlisted to sail with a fleet of ships in India. He did this on behalf of his home country, Portugal.

During this time, he learned to navigate the waters and use the stars for guidance. The islands where he sailed were around India and Asia. They were called the Spice Islands. This was because they were rich in spices and other treasures, and the rulers in Europe wanted easier access to these places. This was because the lands and the seas were controlled by enemy nations. If Europeans wanted easier access to these treasures, they needed to find another way.

Explorers such as Christopher Columbus had already discovered the new world called the American continent. However, no one had yet discovered a westward passage from Europe to Asia.
Ferdinand determined that he could accomplish this amazing mission. First, he went to the rulers of his home country, Portugal. The king refused to help him.

Next, Ferdinand went to the rulers of Spain. This time he was successful. The rulers agreed to fund his trip. He was given five ships, and they set sail on September 20, 1519. They sailed south toward Africa, then they headed southwest toward the tip of South America. The journey was long. It took many months.

Off the coast of what later became Argentina, Ferdinand had some trouble. The crew from one of the ships in his fleet rebelled against him. There was a fight, but he was able to stop it. They had to leave the traitors behind, but they were able to keep sailing. Now instead of five ships they only had four.

On October 21, 1520, they finally found their way around the tip of South America. This was the passage that would lead to Asia! It had been more than a year since they first left Spain. The crews were weak and hungry, because they had been short on food for a long time. One of the ships deserted them, and now there were only three ships left.

The sailors entered the Pacific Ocean and continued sailing north then westward. At last, the sailors landed in Guam. It was now March of 1521. They were able to get fresh food and water, and rest.

There was much excitement. Ferdinand had proved that Europeans could reach the Asian lands by sailing westward! He sent a message to the king of Spain to tell him what he had found. Then, he continued exploring the islands in the area.
This ended up being a bad choice. During a fight with the native people, Ferdinand was killed in battle.

His people were left to return to Spain without him. There were now only two ships, and the journey would be dangerous. On their way back, one of the ships became ruined. It could no longer sail. Now there was only one ship left out of five to get back to Spain.

The last ship finally made it back to the homeland. It was September 8, 1522. It had been three years since they first left.

Ferdinand Magellan’s name was honored for his discovery, and the passage around South America was named after him. Today it is called the Strait of Magellan. His journey proved other facts, as well. It showed that the world was round. It also showed that the world was much bigger than anyone had ever realized before!
Ferdinand Magellan

1) Which is the main idea of the passage?
   a. The turmoils that Magellan and team were confronted with during his journey
   b. How Magellan discovered a westward passage from Europe to Asia
   c. The tragic death of Magellan
   d. Magellan’s endeavors to help Europeans gain access to Asian spices.

2) Why was it important for the Europeans to find another way to the ‘Spice Islands’?

3) Write two difficulties that Magellan and his team encountered while they were on the historic voyage.

4) In which ways, was Ferdinand’s voyage historical? Which one do you think stands out?
Ferdinand Magellan

5) Find out which words from the passage mean the definitions a to f.
   
a. direct the course of a ship
   
b. a person who discovers a new place
   
c. a group of people who work on a ship
   
d. a person who betrays someone or something
   
e. to leave someone who needs or counts on you
   
f. a narrow passage of water
Ferdinand Magellan

1) Which is the main idea of the passage?
   a. The turmoils that Magellan and team were confronted with during his journey
   b. How Magellan discovered a westward passage from Europe to Asia
   c. The tragic death of Magellan
   d. Magellan’s endeavors to help Europeans gain access to Asian spices.
   
   Answer: d

2) Why was it important for the Europeans to find another way to the ‘Spice Islands’?
   It was important to find another way because the lands and the seas were controlled by enemy nations and the sailors found it hard to get to these islands.

3) Write two difficulties that Magellan and his team encountered while they were on the historic voyage.
   The crew from one of the ships in his fleet rebelled against Magellan. To make matters worse, there was a shortage of food, so the crews were weak and hungry.

4) In which ways, was Ferdinand’s voyage historical? Which one do you think stands out?
   First of all, he discovered the westward passage to Asia from Europe.
   Secondly, the voyage not only showed that the world is round, but also proved that it's much bigger than it was believed to be. However, what stands out for me is the fact that Magellan became the first European to sail completely around the globe.
Ferdinand Magellan

5) Find out which words from the passage mean the definitions a to f.

a. direct the course of a ship
   navigate

b. a person who discovers a new place
   explorer

c. a group of people who work on a ship
   crew

d. a person who betrays someone or something
   traitor

e. to leave someone who needs or counts on you
   desert

f. a narrow passage of water
   strait