



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2007 Volume II: Voyages in World History Before 1500

The Expansion of Maps and Minds before 1500: Christopher Columbus, Ibn Battuta, and Google Earth

Guide for Curriculum Unit 07.02.08
by Christopher Bostock

This unit is designed to help middle school students acclimate themselves with world geography. By examining the writings of Ibn Battuta (a Moroccan Muslim traveler from the 1300s) and Christopher Columbus (one of the most well-known explorers in history), students will compare ancient geography with that of the modern world. In this unit, students will also practice their ability to judge the merit of primary sources, draw connections between themselves and the text, and practice using evidence to support arguments in their writing.

Another crucial component of this unit involves the use of technology to map out the routes traveled by the explorers during their journeys. Google Earth, a program developed by the software company Google that is available freely on the Internet, is a virtual globe. Students will use the software to trace the routes made by their explorers and create short animated films, which they will use to educate their classmates on world geography. The goal is to make students active participants in learning geography and to become critical historians who understand historical bias and the importance of different forms of sources.

(Recommended for Social Studies, grades 7-8.)

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