

# Lesson

# 1

## Time

1535

1685

1835

1535  
Hernando Cortés reaches Baja California

1542  
Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo explores Alta California

1602  
Sebastián Vizcaino sails to Monterey Bay



### WHAT TO KNOW

Why did Europeans explore the Americas?

- ✓ Identify the sea routes of early explorers of California and the North Pacific.
- ✓ Explain the effects of waterways on exploration.

### VOCABULARY

**conquistador** p. 111

**cost** p. 111

**benefit** p. 111

**peninsula** p. 112

**galleon** p. 114

**ocean current** p. 114

**wind pattern** p. 114

### PEOPLE

Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo

Francis Drake

Sebastián Rodríguez

Cermeño

Sebastián Vizcaino

### PLACES

Alta California

Baja California



### GENERALIZE



California Standards

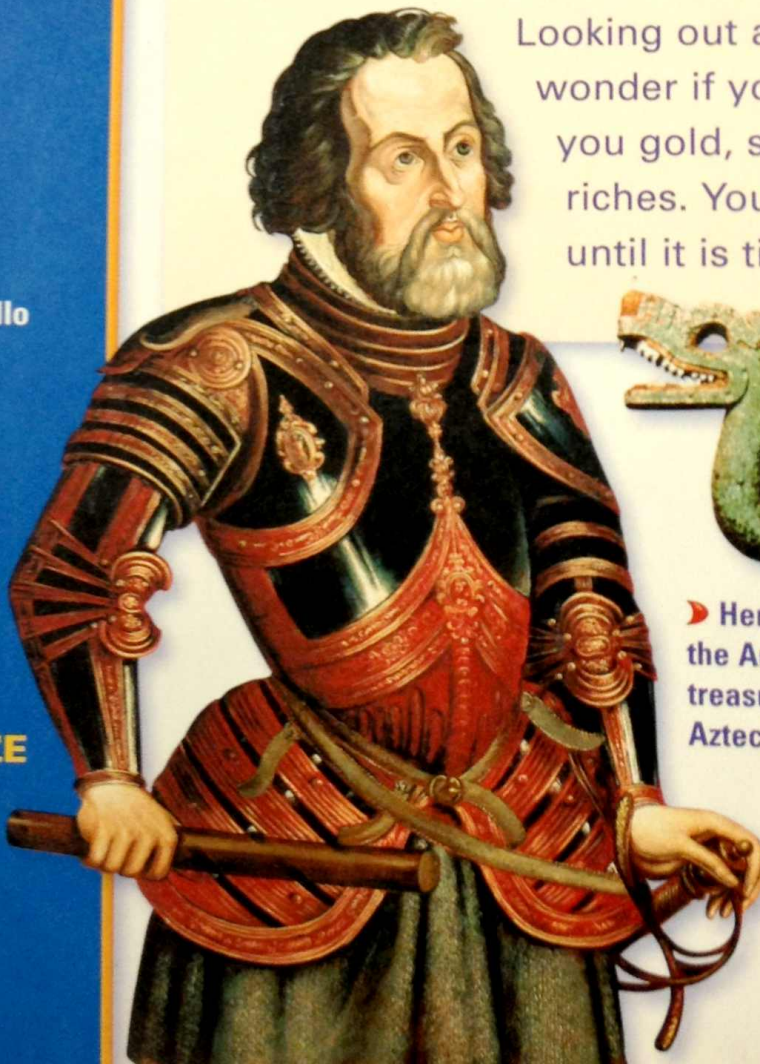
HSS 4.2, 4.2.2, 4.2.3

# Explorers Come to California

**YOU ARE THERE**

Imagine that you're a Spanish sailor in the 1500s. Today, you're about to land on the coast of California. Up above, the sails of your ship flap loudly in the wind. Below your feet, the deck rocks back and forth on the Pacific waters.

Looking out at the new land, you wonder if your trip will bring you gold, silver, and other riches. You can hardly wait until it is time to row to shore!



➤ Hernando Cortés came to the Americas looking for treasure, like the piece of Aztec jewelry above.



### FAST FACT

The name *California* comes from Queen Calafia, a character in a book that was popular in Europe in the 1500s.

► When this map was drawn in 1657, mapmakers thought that California was an island. Why do you think they would think this?

## The Conquistadors

By the early 1500s, Spain had claimed large parts of the Americas. Some Spanish explorers came in search of riches. Others wanted to change the beliefs of the native peoples, or convert them, to Christianity. These explorers are known as **conquistadors** (kahn•KEES•tuh•dawrz), or conquerors. The lands they conquered became known as New Spain.

In 1521, a conquistador named Hernando Cortés (er•NAHN•doh kawr•TEZ) attacked the Aztec Indians in Mexico. Cortés and his soldiers defeated the Aztec and took their gold, silver, and jewels. Then he tore down the city of Tenochtitlán (tay•nawch•teet•LAHN). In its place, the Spanish built Mexico City as the capital of New Spain.

Explorers in the Americas also searched for a shortcut to Asia. Europeans wanted to trade for silk and spices there. At the time, however, European ships had to sail all the way around the tip of either South America or Africa to reach Asia.

Spanish explorers had heard stories about a narrow waterway called the Strait of Anián (ah•nee•AHN). It was supposed to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Finding this strait would come with a high **cost**. It meant that Spain would have to send ships and sailors into the northern Pacific Ocean. Still, if the route were found, it would be of great **benefit**, or help, to the Spanish. It would shorten the trip to Asia, making trade with Asia easier.

### READING CHECK ✨ GENERALIZE

Why did conquistadors travel to New Spain?

# Looking for a Shortcut

**TIME** 1542

**PLACE** Alta California

In search of the Strait of Anián, Cortés sailed north from the western coast of Mexico. In 1535, he reached what he thought was an island and claimed it for Spain. Other explorers discovered later that the region was not an island. It was a peninsula (puh•NIN•suh•luh). A **peninsula** is land that has water almost all around it. The area would come to be known as **Baja California**. *Baja* (BAH•hah) means “lower” in Spanish.

Cortés never found the Strait of Anián, but other Spanish explorers continued to look for it. In June 1542, **Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo** (roh•d•REE•ges kah•BREE•yoh) set out from Mexico to explore the area that Spain would later call **Alta California**.

*Alta* means “high” or “upper” in Spanish. The region is “higher,” or farther north, than Baja California. Cabrillo’s ships carried 250 sailors and soldiers. They reached San Diego Bay in September 1542.

Cabrillo and his crew continued to sail north and met Chumash Indians. Of the meeting, Cabrillo wrote:

“We saw an Indian town on the land next to the sea, with large houses built much like those of New Spain. Many fine canoes each with twelve or thirteen Indians came to the ships.”\*

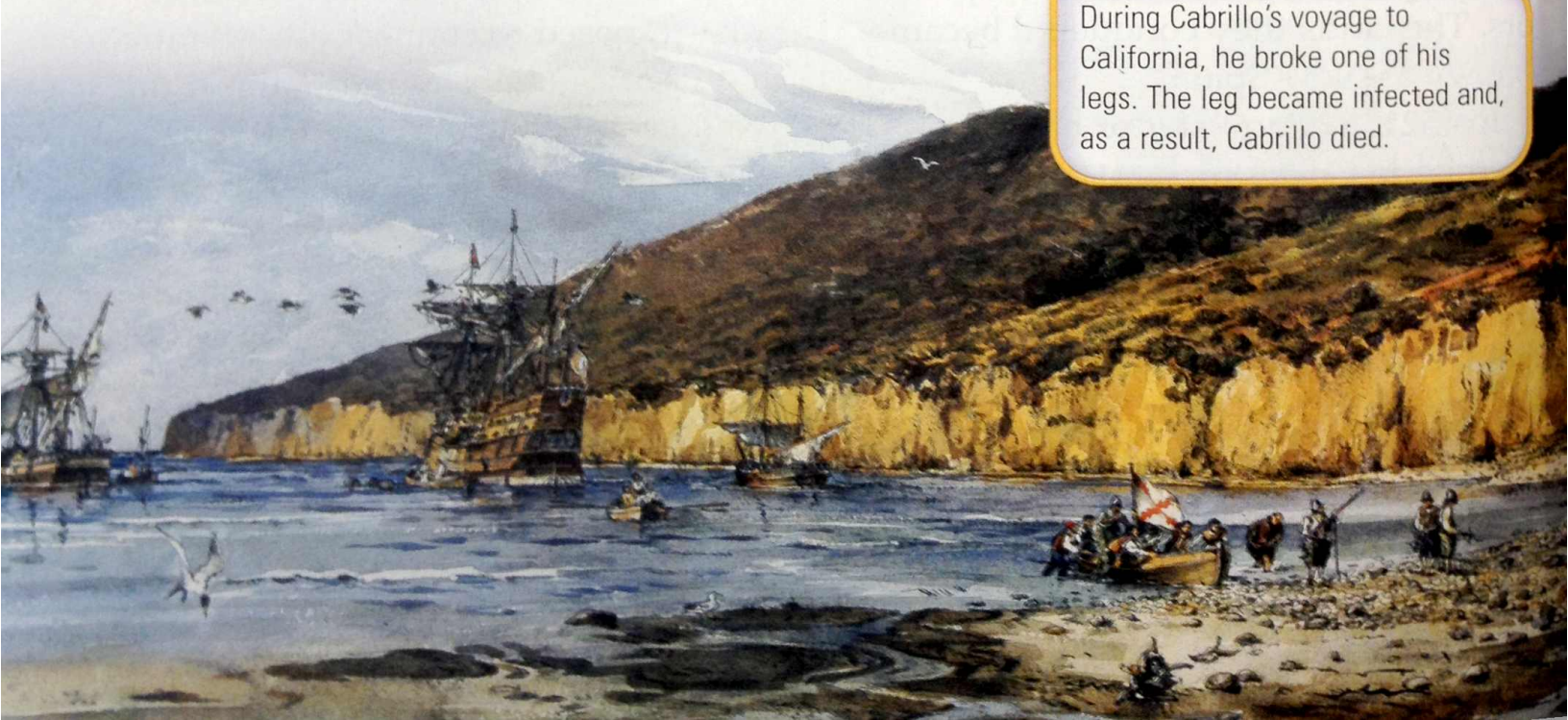
Cabrillo and his crew sailed even farther north. They found neither treasures nor a shortcut to Asia. However, Cabrillo’s voyage did help the Spanish learn about the coast of Alta California.

\*Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo. From *Relation of the Voyage of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, 1542–1543*. American Journeys Collection, Document No. AJ-001. Wisconsin Historical Society, 2003.

► This painting shows what Cabrillo’s landing in Alta California in 1542 might have looked like.

## **FAST FACT**

During Cabrillo’s voyage to California, he broke one of his legs. The leg became infected and, as a result, Cabrillo died.



## Early European Explorers to Alta California



### ANALYZE SKILL Analyze Maps

📍 **Movement** Which explorer sailed farthest north?

Soon other European countries joined in the search for a waterway between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In December 1577, English explorer **Francis Drake** set sail for New Spain. There, he attacked Spanish ships and settlements and took their gold and other riches.

Drake crossed the Atlantic and sailed through the Strait of Magellan at the southern tip of South America. While sailing north along the Pacific

coast, Drake attacked several Spanish settlements. In one raid, Drake's crew took 80 pounds of gold!

In the summer of 1579, Drake reached the California coast. He claimed the land for England and then circled the globe before returning home to England.

### READING CHECK SUMMARIZE

How would a waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans be helpful to Europeans?