John Cabot Reading Comprehension
Name_____

Early Life

John Cabot was most likely born in Italy, some time around the year 1450. In Italy, he is referred to as Giovanni Caboto. Not much is known about his early life except for the fact that he became a Venetian citizen (resident of Venice) in 1476. In the 1480s, he married a woman named Mattea and had three sons. In the 1490s, he apparently moved to Spain and then England, at least in part, to escape debt accrued in Italy.

Sailing West to Reach the Indies

After the Columbus discovery of the West Indies, Cabot began formulating a plan to reach "the Indies" by sailing west at a more northerly latitude, where the voyage from Europe would be shorter. Historians believe that Cabot found supporters in the English city of Bristol, which was the second-largest seaport in England. In 1496, he made Bristol the headquarters for his seafaring operations and began to make preparations for a journey across the ocean.

Exploring Eastern Canada

Cabot probably first set sail in 1496, though this first voyage proved unsuccessful and Cabot turned back to England. In 1497, Cabot is thought to have set sail again with his son Sebastian and seventeen other crew members. This time, his voyage was successful. One of the boats under his command, the Matthew, sighted land and probably landed on Labrador, Newfoundland, or Cape Breton Island in modern-day eastern Canada on June 24, 1497, after 52 days at sea. Cabot claimed this land for England. Cabot continued to explore the maritime region of Canada and thought he found part of Asia, but he never found the famed Northwest Passage.

Way Off Course

Cabot and his crew quickly sailed back to England, where he was welcomed as a hero. Cabot promised Henry VII that the land he found was full of silk and spices, and that the land he discovered was close to Japan. The king was easily convinced to finance Cabot's next journey, which set sail in 1498. This expedition was outfitted with two ships and 300 men. Sailing west from Bristol, the expedition pushed north along the coast of Greenland. The farther north they sailed along the coast, however, the colder it became and the larger the icebergs were. Cabot's crew mutinied and he was forced to navigate to the south, where no new discoveries were made. Cabot and his crew returned in England in the fall of 1498 and he died shortly thereafter.

1. Which statement about Cabot is supported by the passage?
a) He had no children.
b) Information about his early life can be found in his journals.
c) He married in the 1480s.
d) He was born in Spain.

2. Which event from Cabot's travels happened last?
a) Cabot set sail with his son Sebastian.
b) Cabot faced large icebergs and returned to England.
c) Cabot claimed Canadian land for England.
d) Cabot claimed Canadian land for England.

3. Which best describes Cabot?
a) A brave explorer who expanded England's realm
b) An English hero who accomplished all his goals
c) A cowardly peasant who stumbled upon fame
d) A star navigator with military knowledge

4. Which best explains why England funded Cabot's explorations?
a) The country was being attacked and they needed a place of refuge.
b) They wanted access to new spices and to expand the kingdom.
c) They felt Cabot was a lunatic and wanted him out of the country
d) They wanted experience sailing in adverse weather conditions.

5. Which statement is not supported by the passage?
a) Cabot landed in eastern Canada after 52 days at sea.
b) Cabot died around the age of 50.
c) Cabot's second major voyage had only one ship.
d) Cabot became a Venetian citizen around age 26.

6. Which statement best describes the practice of exploration?
a) Risky, but with big reward
b) Daunting, but only with royal support
c) Arduous, but reliable
d) Simple, but only for a select few

7. Which is the best synonym for the word "mutinied," used in the passage?
a) Agreed
b) Overheated
c) Rebelled
d) Multiplied

----------Key----------

1. (c)
2. (b)
3. (a)
4. (b)
5. (c)
6. (a)
7. (c)

----------Key----------

1. (a)
2. (a)
3. (c)
4. (c)

5. (b)
6. (d)
7. (b)