

ABOUT SIR FRANCIS DRAKE

Francis Drake was born in Devon, England, in the 1540s. As a young boy, he worked on English ships.

In 1577 England's Queen Elizabeth sent Drake on a secret voyage to America. She wanted him to make surprise attacks on Spanish ships and lands in the new continent. England didn't like that Spain controlled much of the New World.

In November of 1577, Drake set sail with five ships and 150 men. He headed toward the Strait of Magellan, a narrow 350-mile-long (563 km) waterway at the southern end of South America. When Drake reached this area, there was a storm. He thought his two smallest ships wouldn't make it through. He took the crews of these two ships onto the other three larger ships. The two little ships were burned. The remaining three ships sailed onward. The storm became violent. One ship sank, and the other sailed back to England. Only Drake's ship, the *Golden Hind*, made it through the Strait of Magellan.

Drake turned his ship north and sailed up the western side of South America. Midway up present-day Chile, Drake came upon

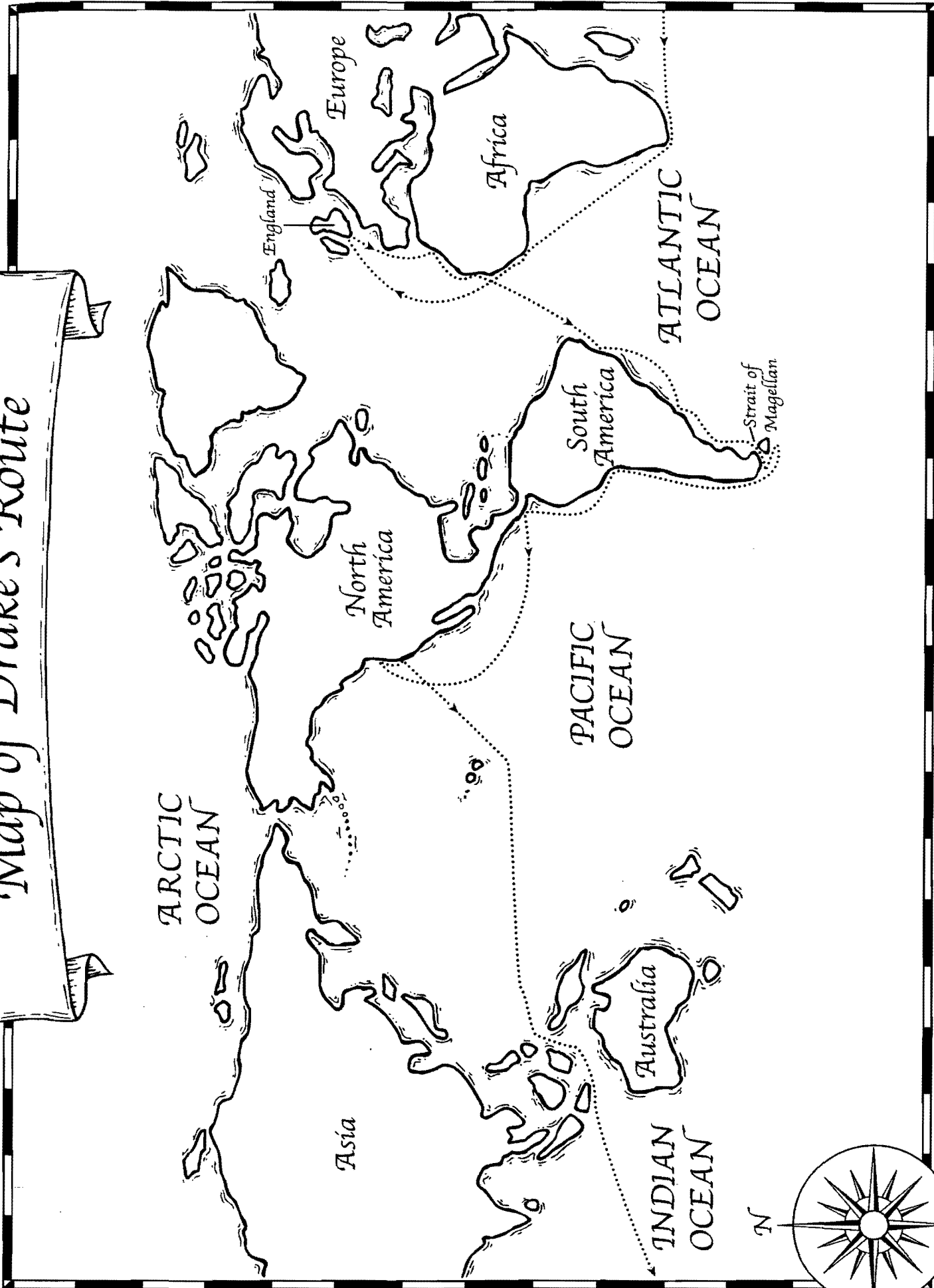


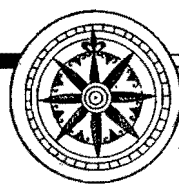
a Spanish town called Valpariso. There, he raided a Spanish ship and stole gold, silver, and jewels. Drake continued sailing north, raiding Spanish towns and ships as he went. He was so quick that the Spanish couldn't warn the next settlements in time.

Drake and his crew continued sailing north. They ended up just north of San Francisco Bay, along California's coast. There, the English met friendly Indians and traded with them. Drake claimed this land for England and called it New Albion. Today, this area is known as Drake's Bay.

In July 1579, Drake headed back to England. He didn't want to take the southern route back by the Spanish settlements and risk being attacked. Instead, he took a western route across the Pacific Ocean. After sailing around the southern tip of Africa, he reached England in September of 1580. He was the first Englishman to have sailed around the world.

Map of Drake's Route





ABOUT JACQUES CARTIER

In the early 1500s, France decided to find a short route to the Indies by trying a northern route around America. This route was called the Northwest Passage.

In 1534 a Frenchman named Jacques Cartier set off from St. Malo, France, to find the passage. He had two ships and a crew of 62 men. Cartier headed northwest. He reached Newfoundland and sailed around its northern tip to Labrador. On land, he set up a cross and claimed the area for France. He named the land New France.

After leaving Labrador, Cartier sailed southwest and discovered a gulf. The gulf was later named the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Cartier explored lands around the gulf. He bought furs from the native tribes, who told Cartier their country was named Canada.

Cartier kept looking for the Northwest Passage. Finally, he discovered a river flowing west from the gulf. He thought it might lead to the Pacific Ocean. But it was late summer, and the weather would soon become cold. With no time left to explore this river, Cartier headed back to France.

In July of 1535, the King of France sent Cartier back to explore the river. This time, Cartier had three ships and a crew of 100 men. He finally reached the river, which



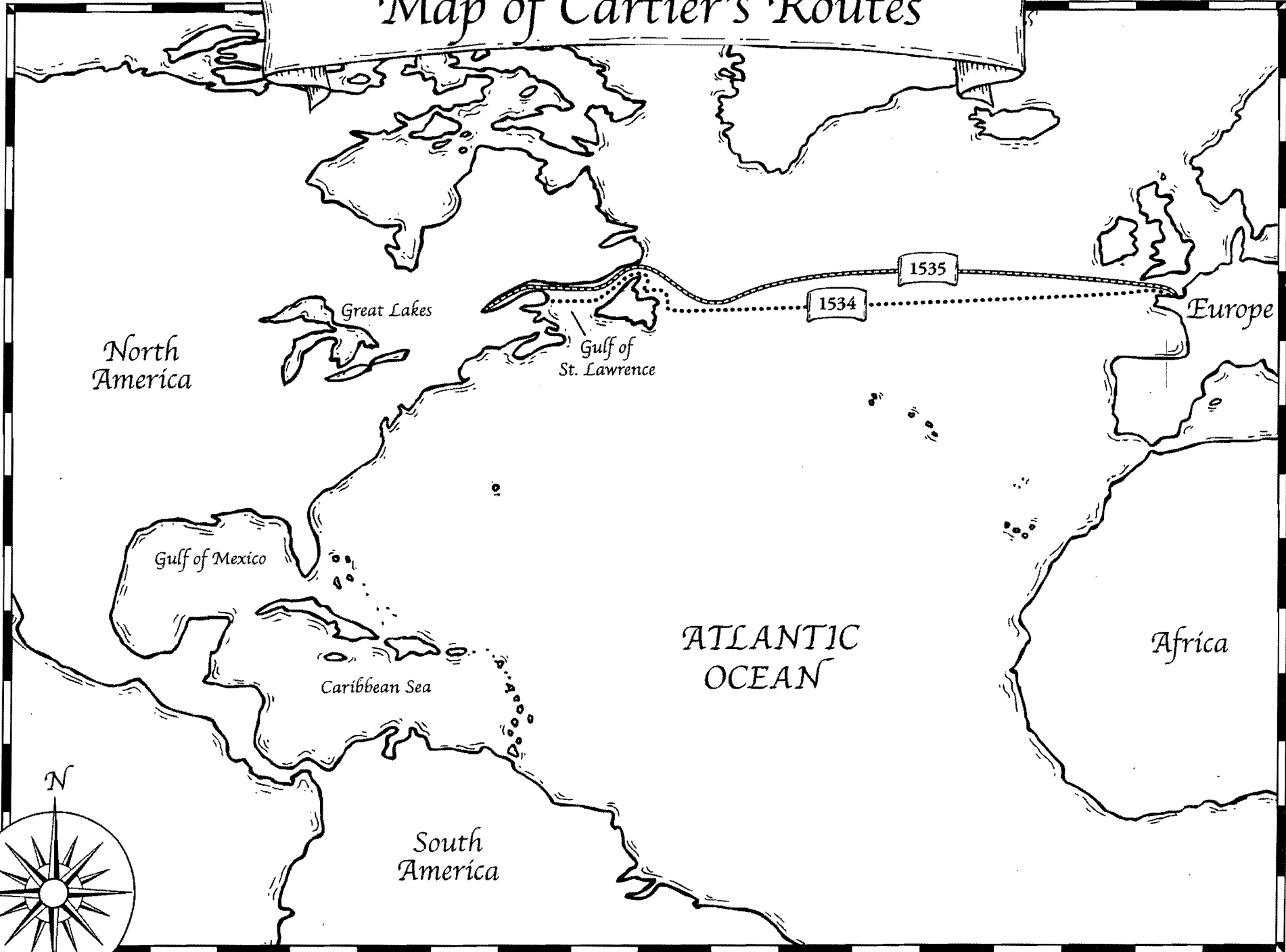
was later named the St. Lawrence River. As he sailed west along the St. Lawrence, the water became shallow. He had to leave behind his largest ships and set off in small boats. Cartier ended up in an area that is now called Montreal. There, he met a tribe of friendly Huron Indians.

The French explorers turned back when they didn't find a Northwest Passage. They traveled the river back to where they had left their ships. Men who had stayed behind with the ships had built a fort. In this area, later named Quebec, Cartier and his crew spent a very cold winter. Many men became ill with scurvy. The Indians taught Cartier and his crew how to cure scurvy, so his men were saved. When the weather warmed, Cartier and his men sailed back to France.

A new French king gave Cartier money to sail back and set up a colony in the new country. The colony failed, mostly because of the freezing weather of Canada's winters.

During the next 20 years, France was at war and lost interest in Canada and finding a Northwest Passage.

Map of Cartier's Routes



North America

Great Lakes

Gulf of St. Lawrence

1534

1535

Europe

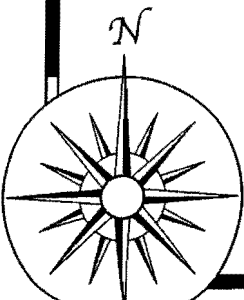
Gulf of Mexico

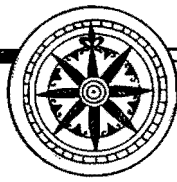
Caribbean Sea

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Africa

South America





ABOUT HERNANDO CORTES

During the 1500s, a Spanish ruler named Diego Velasquez heard stories about a huge and wealthy Aztec empire in Mexico.

He wanted to conquer the Aztecs and get their gold. He chose Hernando Cortes to lead the expedition.

In 1519 Cortes set sail from the southern coast of Cuba. He had 11 ships, 600 sailors, and horses with him. They sailed west through the Gulf of Mexico and landed on the eastern coast of Mexico. There, friendly Indians gave Cortes gifts, including gold.

These Indians sent a message about Cortes's arrival to the Aztec ruler, Montezuma. Montezuma was 200 miles away in the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan. Montezuma believed that one day a great white god would appear from the ocean to the east. Montezuma wondered if Cortes was the great white god. Montezuma sent gifts of gold to Cortes and asked him to leave. When Cortes saw the gold, though, he wanted more.

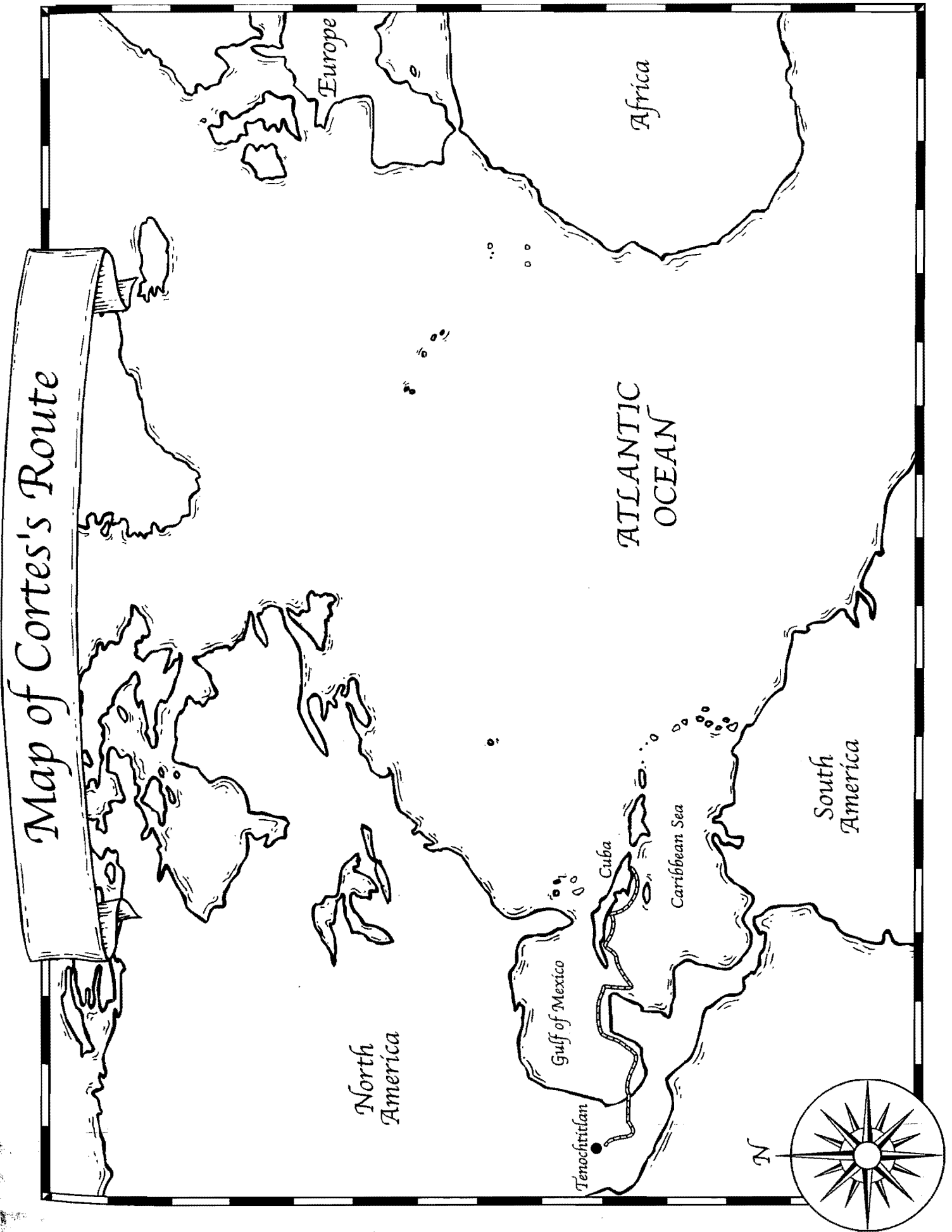
Cortes made plans to go to the Aztec capital. First, he and his crew started building a fort in a town they named Vera Cruz. To keep his soldiers from abandoning

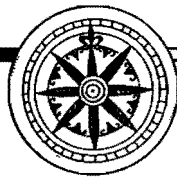


him, Cortes had most of his ships burned. He loaded one ship with Montezuma's gold and sent it back to Spain. Cortes set off with his soldiers and a few hundred Cempaolan Indians, who didn't like the Aztecs, to capture the capital.

Finally, Cortes and his growing army reached Tenochtitlan. It was a beautiful city. Montezuma greeted Cortes at his palace. While there, Cortes's men discovered that the palace had a secret room filled with treasures. The Aztecs became worried that the explorers would take their gold. Montezuma also realized that Cortes was just a man. A bloody battle broke out. In the end, Cortes and his army won the battle and conquered the Aztecs. Cortes also got what he came after—gold.

Cortes renamed the capital Mexico City. They also renamed the country New Spain, and Cortes was appointed governor. The Spanish spread their Christian religion to the native tribes. By 1524 New Spain had become the richest and largest area owned by Spain. Spain was now the most powerful nation in Europe.





ABOUT JOHN CABOT

Like Spain, England wanted to trade with the Indies. In 1497 England's King Henry hired John Cabot to find a quick route there.

Both Columbus and Cabot figured out they could sail west to reach the Indies. Columbus had already found what he believed were islands off the east coast of China. Cabot's plan was to reach the mainland. He would do this by sailing farther north than Columbus had.

In May 1497, Cabot set sail from Bristol, England. There were 18 people on board his small wooden ship named the *Matthew*. Sailing ships depend upon the wind to move them across the water. Farther south, the wind tends to blow westward, but in the north, the winds blow eastward. Because Cabot was sailing westward against the wind, his ship sailed slowly.

Several weeks later, a sailor saw a seagull. They sailed toward a pine-covered coastline. When Cabot reached the shore, he claimed the land for England. He named it New Found Land—or Newfoundland. Cabot thought he had landed in the northeast part of Asia.



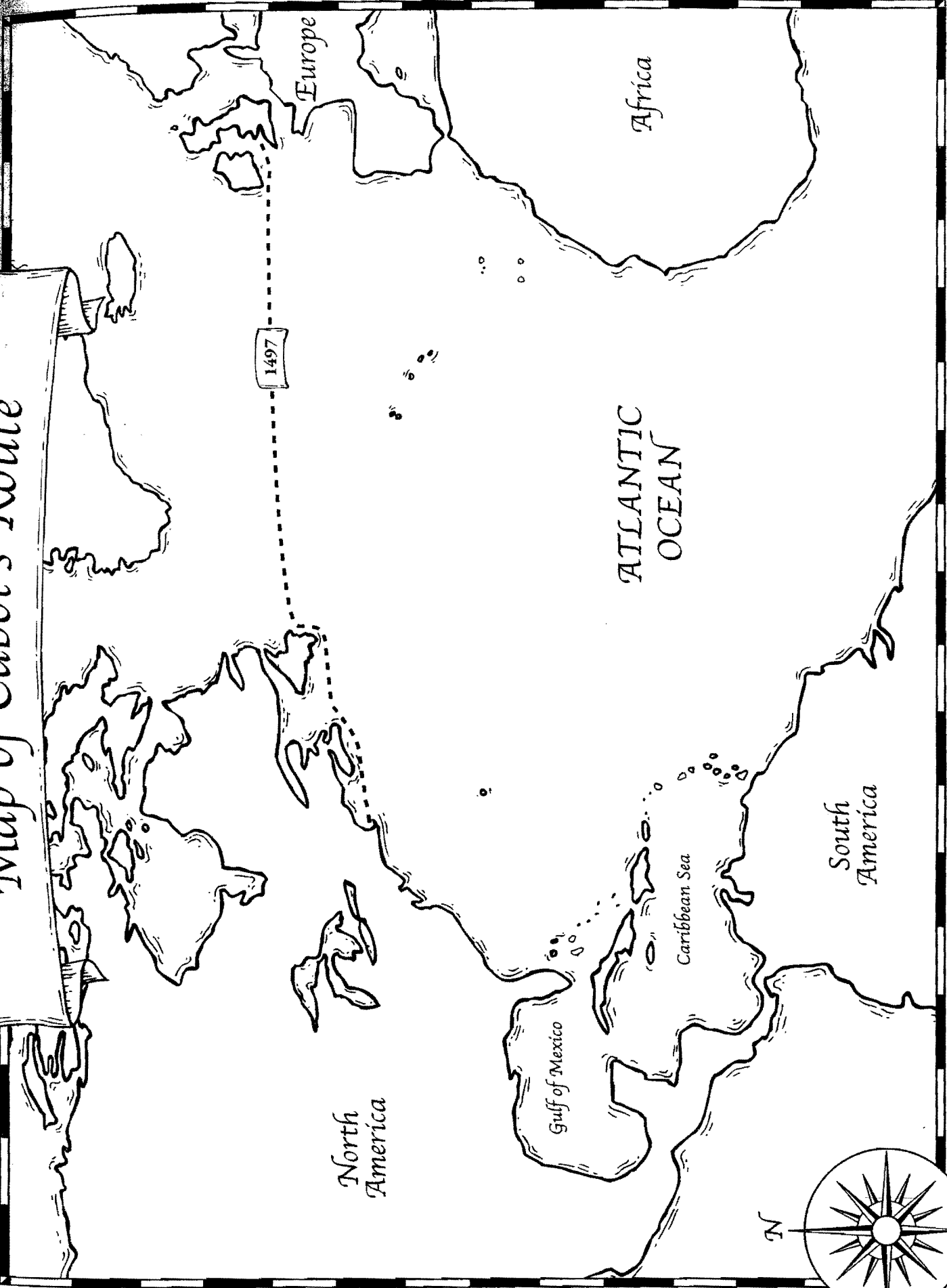
Cabot and his crew continued sailing south down the coast. In the shallow waters, called shoals, the sailors found swarms of codfish. Cabot is believed to have sailed as far south as Boston, Massachusetts. He was sure that China and Japan were just to the south. Cabot sailed home for England to share the news of his discoveries.

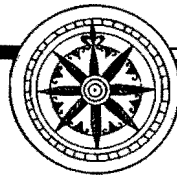
The trip was quicker because the eastward-blowing winds pushed the *Matthew* along. He reached Bristol, England, on August 6, 1497.

In 1498 Cabot once again sailed five ships west toward what he still thought was the Indies. The voyage is an historical mystery. One ship, heavily damaged by storms, returned to England. What happened to Cabot and the other four ships is unknown.

Like Christopher Columbus, John Cabot never realized his mistake. Instead of reaching the Indies, the two European explorers had landed upon a new continent.

Map of Cabot's Route





ABOUT CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

During the 1400s, some European explorers were trying to find an eastward sea route to the Indies so they could buy silks and spices. A sea captain from Italy, named Christopher Columbus, decided to sail in the opposite direction. He thought that a westward sea route would be shorter.

Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain agreed to pay for Columbus's trip. The queen and king wanted to make money for Spain by trading goods with the Indies. They also wanted to spread their Christian faith.

In late spring of 1492, Columbus set off from Palos, Spain, with a crew of 89 men and three ships. The *Santa Maria* was a caravel. The *Nina* and the *Pinta* were both carracks. After stopping at the Canary Islands to repair the *Pinta*, they set sail again on September 6.

The ships headed west across the Atlantic Ocean. Several days later, they no longer saw land. Columbus's crew became afraid because they thought they were getting too far from home. Columbus calmed the sailors by telling them they had traveled fewer miles than they actually had.

On October 11, 1492, the explorers came upon an island. There they met friendly people. Columbus thought he had



reached the Indies, so he called these people "Indians." These native people called their island Guanahani. Columbus claimed the island for Spain and renamed it San Salvador. When Columbus left the island, he took six Indians with him.

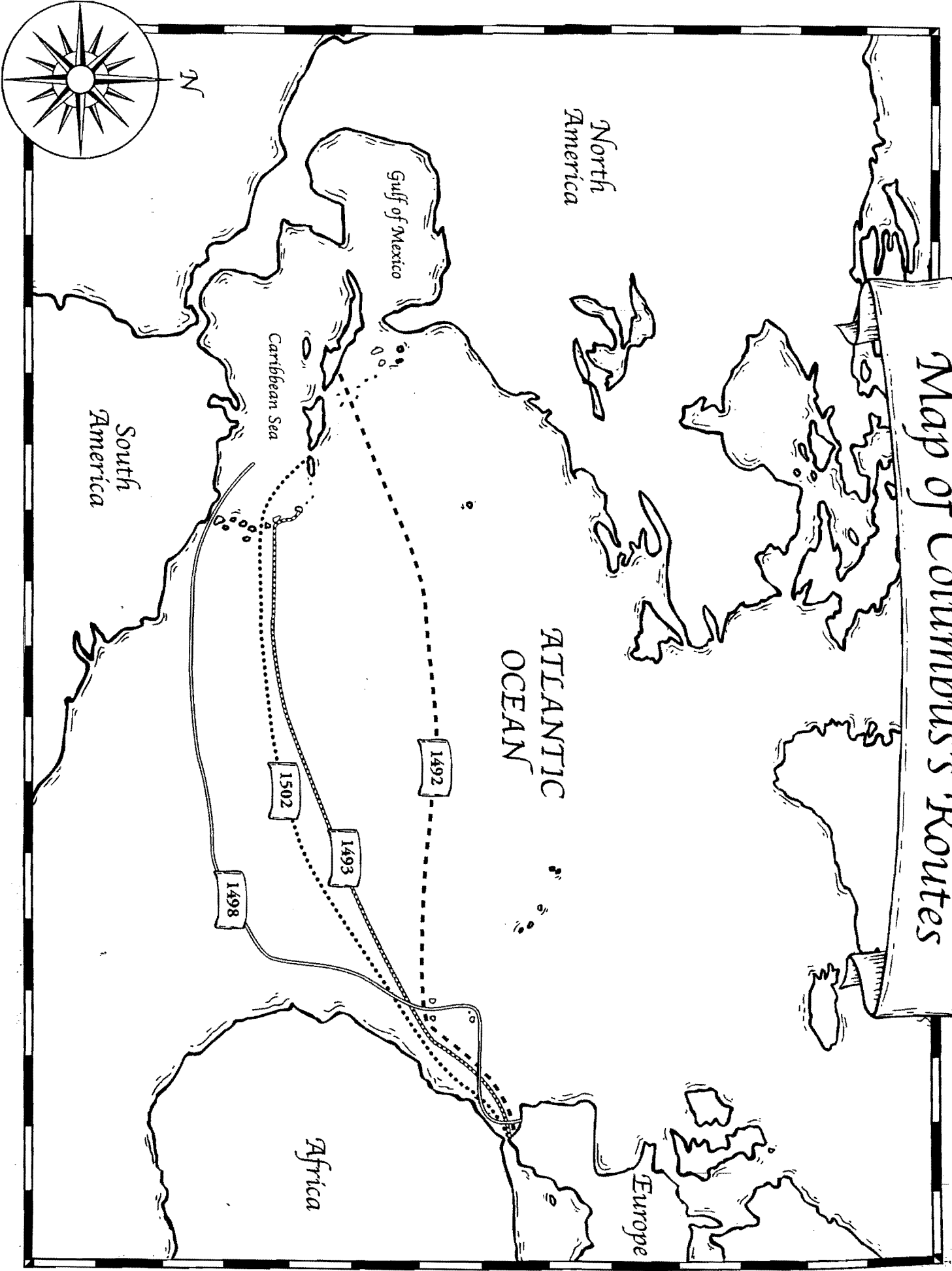
Still believing he had landed in the Indies, Columbus sailed south to find Japan. He landed on a large island. The native people called their island Cuba. Columbus thought this was an Indian name for Japan.

On December 6, Columbus sailed east and came upon another island, which he named Hispaniola. Today, Haiti and the Dominican Republic make up this island.

Columbus headed back to Spain in January. He left behind 39 of his own men to set up a town in Hispaniola. Columbus reached Spain in March. The people of Spain, as well as the queen and king, cheered him.

Columbus sailed west three more times. On each voyage, he believed he had reached the Indies. In fact, part of the area he explored in the Americas is still called the "West Indies." Columbus never knew he had actually found new lands that Europeans hadn't known about.

Map of Columbus's Routes



Note: Reproduce this page for students to use with "Map of Columbus's Routes," as described on page 10.