

WEEK 4

Early Explorers

# Alabama Studies Weekly

GRADE 4



## Alabama on My Mind

Have you ever wondered what it might have been like to live in Alabama before it was Alabama? Before the roads we've come to depend on? Before electricity? Before it was discovered by explorers from the Old World? We can only imagine! Unspoiled nature... abundant wildlife...only the American Indians who lived in the area at the time knew for sure.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus, sailing from Spain in search of India, discovered the Americas. He brought with him strange, new ideas. The New World would never be the same. A few years later, Spanish explorers traveled through what is now the southern part of the United States. They were looking for riches, like gold and silver. They brought with them strange customs and serious diseases, like smallpox, typhus, measles, tuberculosis, chicken pox and influenza. The explorers had built up resistance to these diseases, but when the Indians caught them, illness spread rapidly and killed hundreds of them. Entire villages were wiped out. The Spanish controlled this region of the New World until 1682.

Then, French explorers claimed the area for France. The French were not looking for riches. Instead, they wanted to trade goods with the Indians and strengthen French influence on them. They also wanted to impress the Indians with their military strength and discourage the British in South Carolina from coming to Alabama.

For almost 100 years, the British, the French and the Spanish struggled for control of the region. The French and Indian War was fought during this time. The British won the war and the French were forced to give up territories east of the Mississippi River, including what is now Alabama, to Britain. Those territories west of the Mississippi were given to Spain.

The early history of the region was marked by great adventures of discovery and bloody fights for control of the region. It was a very difficult time for Alabama's American Indians. They endured many years of invasion from Europeans who hoped for a chance to take advantage of the riches and natural resources of the New World.

Can you imagine what it would be like to

leave your home, your family and your country to travel to a mysterious, faraway place? In this issue of Alabama Studies Weekly, you will learn about some of the famous explorers who did just that and changed history forever!

Set the sails and ready the rigging as we take a historic voyage in another edition of Alabama Studies Weekly. This week, we set sail for the 1500s, a time when all of Europe hoped for a chance to take advantage of the opportunities of the rich New World discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492.

How would it feel to explore something new, something that hardly anyone knew anything about? These same questions may have been on the minds of those brave folks who first set sail for this continent hundreds of years ago, before you and I, or even our grandparents, were around. What did those guys find? We thought you'd never ask. Go ahead, explore the rest of this issue of Alabama Studies Weekly. Like the explorers of old, you don't know what's in store for you yet, but that will all change as soon as you turn the page.



# Alabama's Early Explorers Came for Gold, God and Glory!

## Discovering America

For many years, students in the U.S. have been reciting a familiar rhyme: "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue!" We often give Christopher Columbus credit for discovering the Americas. But was Columbus really the first European to see the continent? Actually, he wasn't! In fact, a Viking sailor from Iceland, Leif Ericson, sailed to North America around 1000 C.E.

He explored an area called Vinland. We don't exactly where Vinland is, but there are remains of an Icelandic colony in northeastern Canada. The remains can be seen in a place called L'Anse aux Meadows. The settlement was abandoned after a few years. Before the 1960s, it wasn't known that Europeans settled in North America before Columbus! Sometimes, as we discover more about events in history, we find that they may have happened differently than people have always believed. There's always more to learn. Though he may not have been the first, Columbus will probably always get most of the credit for discovering America, since he's the one who told the rest of the world about it. This sparked a new era of exploration and settlement.

## Alonso Álvarez de Pineda

In 1519, a man named Alonso Álvarez de Pineda explored a big body of water. He called it "río del Espíritu Santo," or River of the Holy Spirit, with a safe harbor on the coast. He wrote about the American Indian settlements and the people he met. For many years, historians have debated about what the río del Espíritu Santo actually is. Some believe it is Alabama's Mobile River and Mobile Bay. Others believe Pineda discovered the mouth of the Mississippi River, farther west. Pineda's ships stayed there for nearly a month, and the explorers discovered more than 40 native villages nearby.

## Cabeza de Vaca's Misadventures

Did you ever have a day when nothing went right? One explorer who had a lot of those days was a Spaniard named Pánfilo de Narváez. He was sent from Spain in 1527 to explore the southeastern part of America. He started out great, with 600 men and plenty of supplies. But, after a hurricane, a mutiny and conflict with local tribes, he sailed off into history on a homemade wooden barge and was never heard from again. One survivor of his misadventures, named Cabeza de Vaca, wandered from Alabama's coastline on an eight-year journey to reach Mexico and be rescued. De Vaca later wrote a book describing his experiences in North America. This book inspired other explorers. When he made it back to Spain, he met Hernando de Soto, governor of Cuba and next in line to set sail for America. De Soto was determined to return to the New World with dreams of striking it rich. He asked de Vaca to join him on his expedition. De Vaca turned him down.

## Hernando de Soto: Looking for Gold

Hernando de Soto brought back thousands of pounds of gold from South America, so why would North America be any different? Many of his rich friends agreed, and away they sailed in 1540. They searched the entire Southeast for gold. Things heated up when they met Chief Tuskaloosa here in Alabama. Tuskaloosa was known to be some 7 feet tall. De Soto and his men took the chief hostage to ensure the people wouldn't hurt them.

That didn't work out like the explorers hoped. They reached a walled city called Talisi, where they met a native army. They were outnumbered, so they started a fire in the city. Historians estimate that about 2,500 members of the tribe died. De Soto's crew, on the other hand, only lost about 20 people. However, many more were wounded and their supplies were burned in the fire. It was impossible to continue the journey after that.

This event marked the beginning of conflict between Alabama's American Indians and Europeans. When de Soto's crew left, the hardship didn't end. The Spaniards brought new diseases that killed thousands of native people in the coming years.

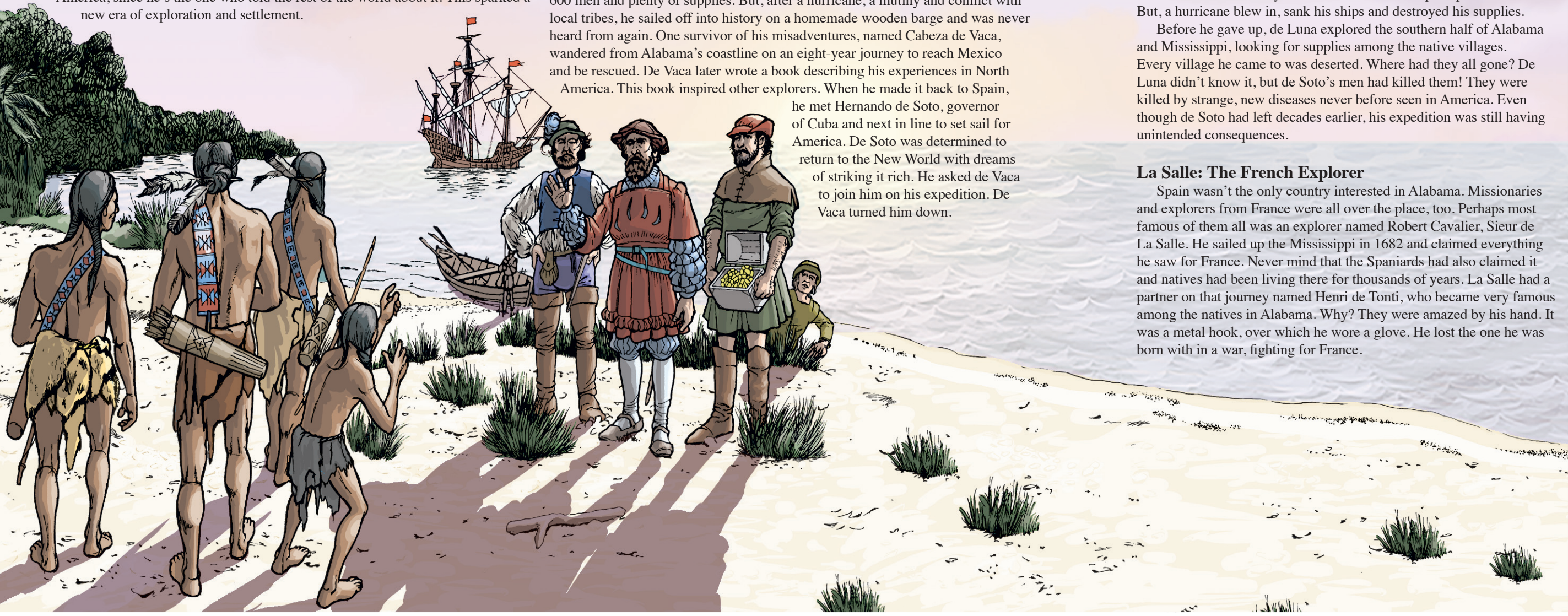
## Tristán de Luna y Arellano Blows Through ...

In 1559 (about 20 years after de Soto), colonists led by a Spaniard named Tristán de Luna y Arellano arrived to set up shop in Alabama. But, a hurricane blew in, sank his ships and destroyed his supplies.

Before he gave up, de Luna explored the southern half of Alabama and Mississippi, looking for supplies among the native villages. Every village he came to was deserted. Where had they all gone? De Luna didn't know it, but de Soto's men had killed them! They were killed by strange, new diseases never before seen in America. Even though de Soto had left decades earlier, his expedition was still having unintended consequences.

## La Salle: The French Explorer

Spain wasn't the only country interested in Alabama. Missionaries and explorers from France were all over the place, too. Perhaps most famous of them all was an explorer named Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle. He sailed up the Mississippi in 1682 and claimed everything he saw for France. Never mind that the Spaniards had also claimed it and natives had been living there for thousands of years. La Salle had a partner on that journey named Henri de Tonti, who became very famous among the natives in Alabama. Why? They were amazed by his hand. It was a metal hook, over which he wore a glove. He lost the one he was born with in a war, fighting for France.



## Clarity of Expression: Henry Hudson

Henry Hudson was an English sea captain and explorer who started off as a failure. He sailed on two voyages for England to find a northeast water route to the rich spice trade in Asia. But both times the icy northern seas blocked his way. He had to return home defeated.

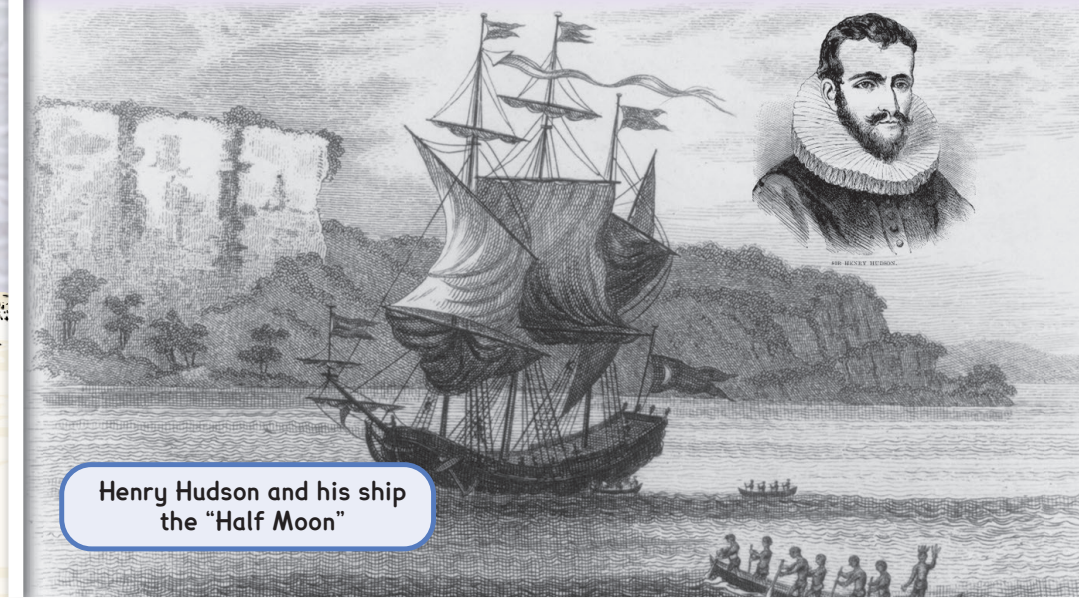
Sounds like the end of his career, right? It wasn't. Hudson next convinced the Dutch East India Company to hire him for exactly the same expedition. In 1609 Hudson and his crew sailed west across the Atlantic. He reached the New World, landing on the island we know today as Manhattan. He sailed inland up a wide river and explored the surrounding valley.

It wasn't a passage to Asia. But Hudson's explorations allowed the Dutch to claim the land and build a fur trading post there in 1614, before the Pilgrims arrived. A Dutch settlement called New Netherland soon followed.

Unfortunately, Hudson's last voyage ended in mutiny. He refused his crew's demands to return home, so the sailors took over the ship, setting Hudson adrift in a small boat. His fate is unknown, but his legacy is Hudson Bay, Hudson River, Hudson Valley and the Dutch settlement that became New York City.

Henry Hudson must have had excellent clarity of expression. He had to be able to explain clearly to the Dutch that his experience and determination made him the best man for the job, even though he was an Englishman and not a Dutchman.

Think about a time that you wanted to convince your parents or teachers to let you try something new. Did you beg and plead? Or did you give them a clear explanation of your reasons? Which way do you think works better?



Henry Hudson and his ship the "Half Moon"

## Alabama Adventures Two Different Worlds Meet

I remember the night of their arrival. I had returned home from the forest to find my mother bent over the bed of my brother. She mopped the fever from his forehead with a soft rabbit skin. His illness had lasted almost a year, and even now, his eyes were glazed and distant. But tonight there hung a mysterious and hopeful smile on his chalky face. Mother, too, was smiling, and her eyes were wet with tears. I asked, "What is it, Mother? Do you weep for sadness or for joy?" Mother turned to me, and her voice trembled. "The day has come at last, my son. Do you remember the old stories of the white spirit who will come and rescue us from trouble? He is here, my son! He has come today, and your brother's illness will end at the touch of his hand. This I know. Of this I am sure!" My heart jumped in my chest. I could say nothing for a long, confused moment, and then I asked, "What says Father of this?" Mother looked at me, sensing my confusion. She said, "He is with the elders, my son. Go, and he will tell you as I have." I could hardly pull my eyes away from the odd smiles of my mother and brother, but I ran as fast as I could to the long house where the tribal elders met. Skins were drawn across the door, so I did not dare enter. Their voices came to me from inside, and I could see flashes of light and shadows around the curtain as the people inside moved about. One man said, "You all saw it. They came from the sky. Down from the sun they came, waving white clouds on tall poles. You saw how they held the ropes, holding the clouds down so they wouldn't float away.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## Conscience

Did you ever stop to think about how lucky you are that your finger hurts when you hit it with a hammer? An 8-year-old boy in England who can't feel pain was on the news. For some reason, his nerves do not signal pain to his brain.

He doesn't know when he's hurting. He's lucky, you say? Well, that condition may just cost him his life. He was burned seriously by a red-hot oven door that he was leaning against. He didn't realize that his skin was sizzling until he was snatched away. The doctors can't help him. All they can do is give him special protective clothing to help keep his wounds clean. The boy is still in danger of dying from his wounds.

Just as your nerve endings send signals to your brain when you're hurt, you have "nerve endings" called a conscience, which sends signals to your heart when you've done something wrong and you know it. Your conscience is one of your greatest gifts. Without it, you, like the boy and the oven door, wouldn't know enough to keep from getting burned—only in a far more serious way. Let's learn to listen to our consciences. We have no better friend.

## American Character



## How did early explorers and American Indians communicate?

### This Week's Question

The early exploration and settlement of our country is full of stories of misunderstandings between settlers and natives. It might be easy to understand why those people often misunderstood each other. They were very different from each other, for one thing. When the earliest settlers made contact with the people already living here, they looked at their simple clothing, houses and machines and figured incorrectly that the people were primitive and savage. The natives must have looked at the clothing, weapons and vehicles of the newcomers and thought that they were frightening and strange. And, of course, the fact that neither one spoke the language of the other was another difference that made it tough to find out about each other. The misunderstandings between the people often led to fighting. It's surprising how much difference "difference" makes. How do you think our history would be different if the early settlers and natives had tried harder to understand each other?

## Alabama Regions

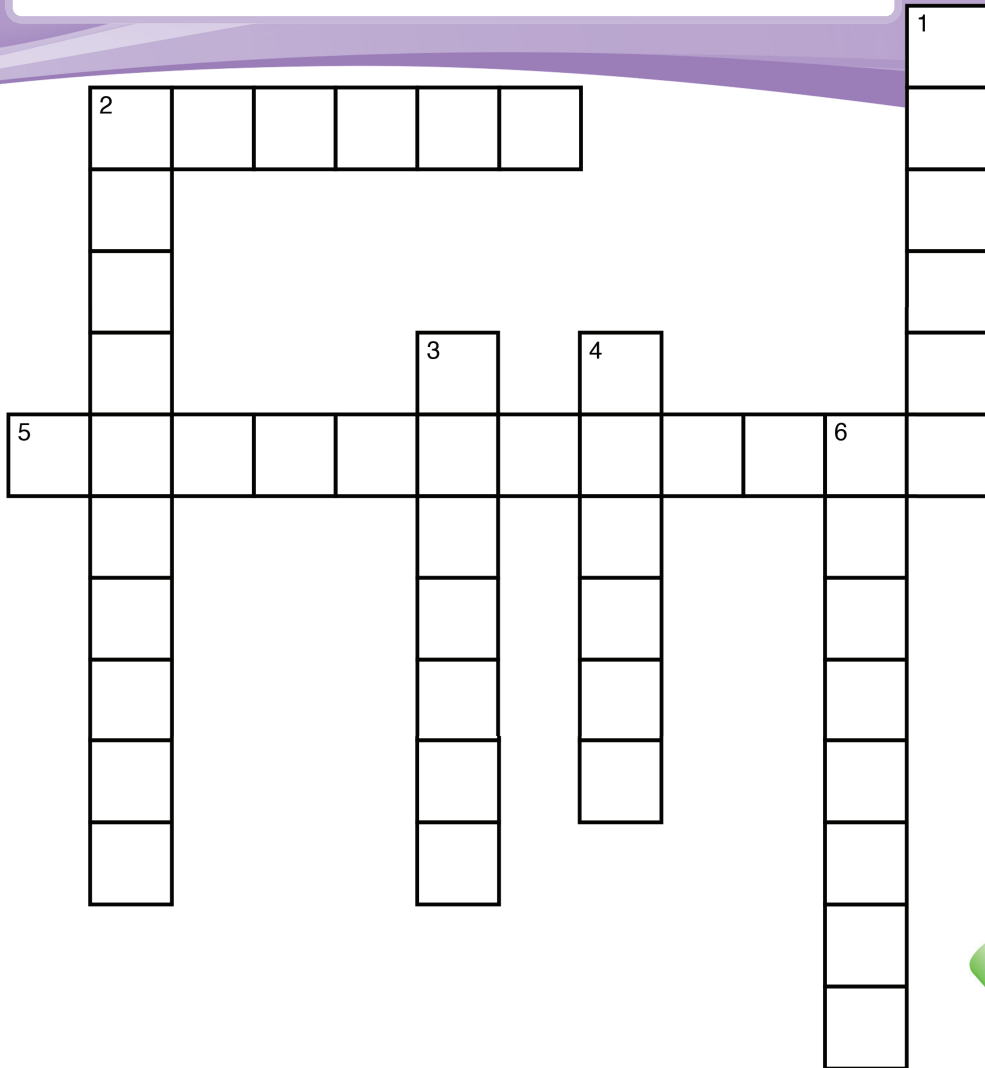
### Conflicts Over Land and Heritage

The 1500s to the mid-1800s was a time of great change in the region that is now Alabama. American Indians were exposed to new and frightening things. Many died from serious diseases that the European explorers brought with them. The Indians reorganized into four major groups, or nations: Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw and Chickasaw. All of these groups had their own heritages and cultures, but they all shared one common thing: the importance of their religious traditions.

Europeans and Africans who came to the area brought their own distinct traditions and religious beliefs. Through the years, as the groups lived together, their cultures melded, or combined. They all, however, continued to compete for land and power.

As people from other parts of the United States came to the area, settlements were formed. The American Indians were coerced, or forced, to give up much of their land and take up the ways of the settlers. Some of them agreed to live as the settlers did, but many of them rebelled and fought back. The Creek Indian War was fought by those Indians who refused to give up their land against the settlers and American soldiers. Several bloody battles were fought, and hundreds of people on both sides died before the Indians surrendered (gave up) and signed the Treaty of Fort Jackson. They were forced to give up their land, the home of their ancestors (family members who lived before them) forever.

Name \_\_\_\_\_



**ACROSS**

- 2. walled native city burned by de Soto's crew
- 5. a survivor from Pánfilo de Narváez's group of explorers

**DOWN**

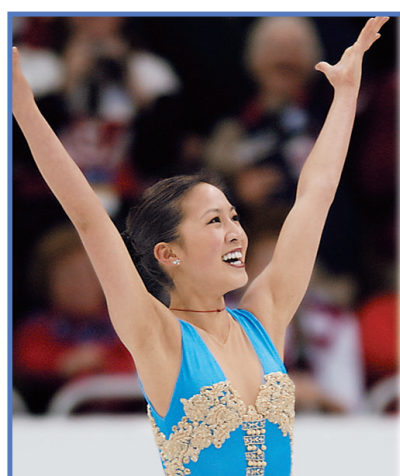
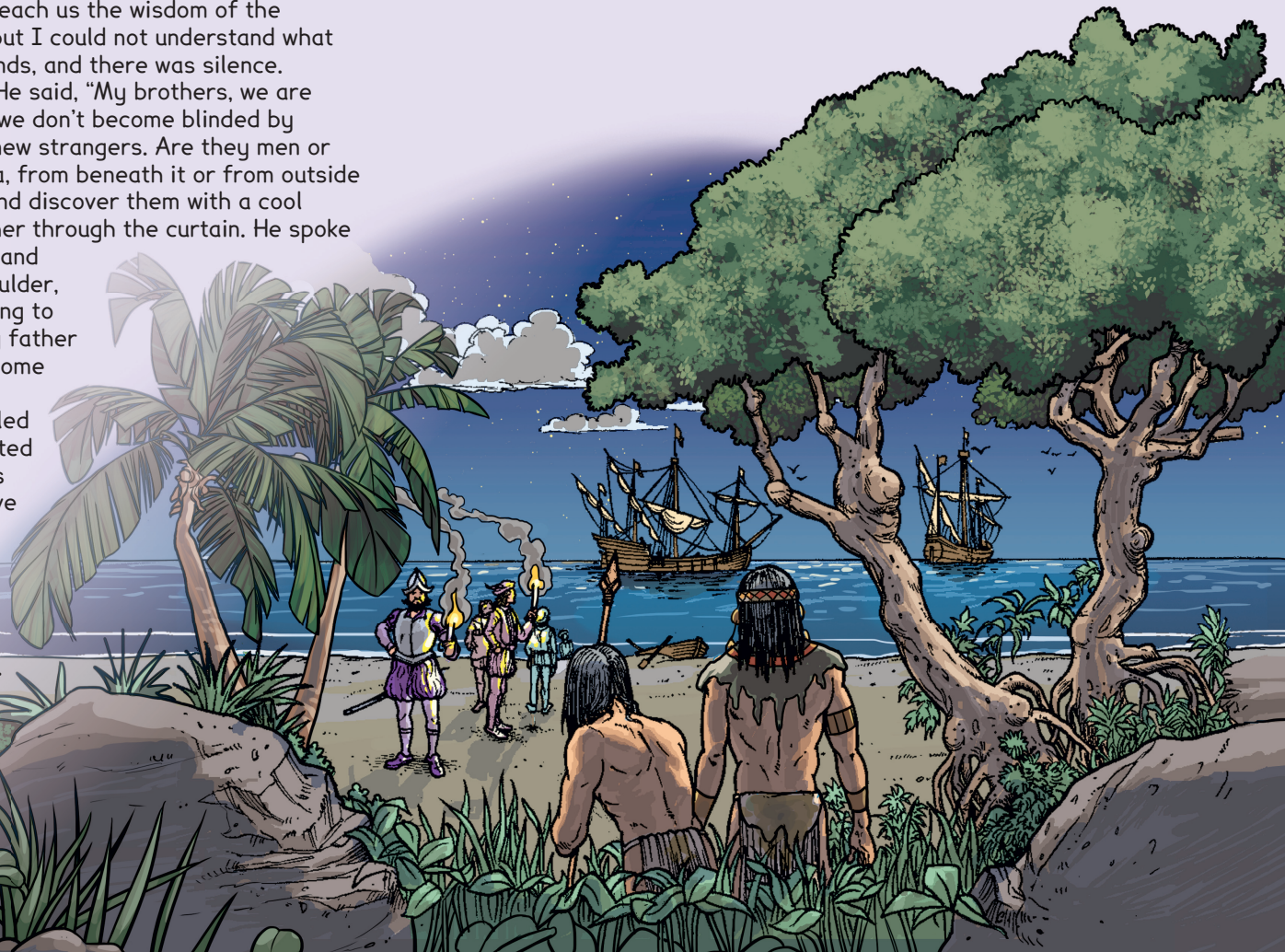
- 1. explored a body of water he called the río del Espíritu Santo: Alonso Álvarez de \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. the chief taken hostage by de Soto's crew
- 3. a French explorer who had an "iron-fisted" friend
- 4. a Spanish gold digger
- 6. the man credited with discovering America



As you read this week's lesson, circle or highlight all proper nouns with any color pen or highlighter. This will help you find some of the crossword answers and get ready for this week's test.

**Two Different Worlds Meet** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Let us ask them to heal our sick and teach us the wisdom of the heavens." A murmur of voices followed, but I could not understand what they said. Then I heard a clapping of hands, and there was silence. Another voice spoke. It was my father. He said, "My brothers, we are amazed, but we must watch carefully so we don't become blinded by our own awe. We know nothing of these new strangers. Are they men or gods? Do they come from across the sea, from beneath it or from outside the world? We must know these things and discover them with a cool head." I listened to the words of my father through the curtain. He spoke for such a long time that I became tired and sat down. Then I felt his hand on my shoulder, shaking me awake. The elders were walking to their homes, talking in hushed voices. My father said, "You have come out of the forest. Come with me. I will show you." I followed him through the trees, and he was silent. He led me to the beach and, still in silence, pointed his finger to the water. I rubbed my eyes and looked. There were huge clouds above a giant canoe in the sea, and fires lit the shore. Strange men, covered in heavy clothing, talked in a language I didn't understand. They were pale, and I thought they looked sick. Father looked at me, and my mind was full of questions. I did not know whether these were men or gods, but, as I watched them, something in my heart told me that our lives would never be the same again.



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**Language Arts Connection**

Use any color to circle or highlight three relative pronouns (who, whose, whom, which, that, etc.) in this week's magazine. Underline the related noun. (CC ELA L.4.1)