

Globe Lesson 3
Old World and New World - Why Contact Took So Long

Skills used Latitude & Longitude
 Using scale to measure distance
 Using directions
 Comparing routes

Materials Needed Globe in Horizon Ring Mounting

Lesson

In a previous globe activity you learned about just a few of the hundreds of early cultures that existed in the Americas prior to the arrival of Columbus. In the following activity you will see how geography played a part in delaying lasting contact between the old world and the new world until just over 500 years ago.

On your globe, find the 60°N line of latitude. Trace the line all the way around the globe. In the following activity we will be drawing sea routes that lie south of this line. Not many people lived north of 60°N before the time of Columbus, and for those who did, long distance travel over the sea was difficult and often impossible.

Use your globe's mounting ring to draw and measure the shortest route between Europe and North America that is south of the 60°N line of latitude. Draw the route on the globe. What is this route and how far is it? (1.) _____

Next find the shortest routes between Africa and North America and between Africa and South America. Draw them on your globe. What are these routes and how long are they? (2.) _____

Now look at the distances across the Pacific Ocean. What is the shortest route between Asia and mainland North America and how long is it? Remember to keep your route south of the 60° latitude line. (3.) _____

What is the shortest route between any point in Asia and the continent of South America? Start your measurement in Asia at the eastern tip of Papua New Guinea at 11°S/151°E. (4.) _____

What is the shortest route between Australia and South America? (5.) _____

Of all the routes measured above, which was the shortest? (6.) _____

In this region, and in regions farther north where the continents are even closer together, it is very likely that contacts between the old and new worlds frequently occurred before the time of Columbus. However, this far northern area was remote, and its few inhabitants had little contact with the rest of the world. As a result, very little of the geographical knowledge known to these people reached the large population and commercial centers to the south.

The wide Atlantic and Pacific oceans and the real and imagined dangers associated with sailing across these uncharted oceans separated the civilizations of the old and new worlds for thousands of years. This separation did not end until the lure of great wealth outweighed the risks and uncertainties of exploring these unknown waters.