The European trade route to the East via southern Africa

The Europeans had seen the valuable goods that came from the East namely the spices and silk. The trade of these spices and silk was controlled by the Arab traders. Once the spices and silk reached Europe, the Italian city states took over control. These Italian city states became incredibly rich from this trade. Other European nations also wanted to find a way to the East so that they could also benefit from the spice trade. The Portuguese nation was one of these. With new knowledge and ideas as well as new inventions this was possible.

Activity 5

1. When you get home today, ask the person who does the cooking in your house to help you find different spices. Write the names of these spices in your book.
2. Speak to that person and ask them what each spice is used for.
3. See if this person can tell you which spices go best with which food?
4. Copy the table into your workbook to help you record your answers. The first one has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spice</th>
<th>Used for</th>
<th>Best food to put it in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>Flavouring food, making it taste better.</td>
<td>Chips</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Bring an interesting spice to class so that everyone can smell and possibly even taste it. Report back to the class on the spices in your home.
Bartholomeu Dias is one of the most famous Portuguese explorers. He was the first European to sail around the Cape of Good Hope (today this is Cape Point, which is close to Cape Town). At the time he did not even know that he had done it.

Dias set sail in the year 1487 from Portugal. He first landed in southern Africa in Namibia, at a place which is called Luderitz today. When he sailed from Luderitz his ships were blown off course by a massive gale. The gale blew for days and days. When the wind finally stopped, Dias steered northeast and landed in what is known as Mossel Bay today in the Western Cape in 1488. This is where he met the Khoikhoi people.

He did not know that he had gone around the Cape! He sailed on and then stopped at Algoa Bay, which is known as Port Elizabeth. It was only here that he realised that he had rounded the southern point of Africa.

Dias’s ships continued going north around the coast until the Keiskamma River mouth. Dias was eventually forced to turn back by his crew because they were tired and scared of the unknown. Their food supplies were also running out.

As they rounded the tip of Africa again on their way home, Dias named it the Cape of Good Hope. He called it this because he believed that there was hope of finding a route to India.

After being at sea for 19 months, Dias returned home as a hero. He died on another journey when his ship was wrecked near the Cape in 1500.
Dias and his crew encounter the Khoikhoi in Mossel Bay in 1488

In February 1488 Bartholomeu Dias and his sailors landed at Mossel Bay and they met the Khoikhoi people for the first time. This was the first time that the Khoikhoi people had seen Europeans.

The Portuguese and the Khoi clashed over the sailors’ need for fresh water. A Crossbow was fired killing one of the Khoikhoi people. Do you remember learning in Grade 5 that the Khoikhoi believed that water rights were owned by different groups?

If others wanted to use their water they had to get their permission. Dias and his sailors did not know this.

Activity 6
1. Look at the picture of the statue of Dias on the previous page and you will see
   a. On his right is a pillar with a cross on the top.
   b. On his left is a ship.
   c. Hanging from his hand is an astrolabe.
   For each of these write a sentence in which you explain its importance. Use what you learnt in the previous unit to help you interpret the importance of each item.
2. What part of Dias’s story above tells you that the tools that they had to help them navigate were not accurate? Explain.

Activity 7
1. Why did the Portuguese and the Khoikhoi clash? What part of the Khoikhoi culture did the Europeans not understand?
2. “The Story of Dias and the Khoikhoi was a story that was going to be repeated for the next four hundred years.” Discuss with your partner, what you think this quotation means.
The Journey of Da Gama

New Words:

Scurvy - A disease caused by not having enough vitamin C in the diet. A person with scurvy is usually very weak and has bleeding gums and can die if it is very bad.

Viceroy – This is a governor of a colony, country or province. The viceroy acts in the name of the king.

Monsoon – A wind system of the Indian Ocean that blows from the southwest in the summer and the northeast in the winter. The southwest monsoon brings with it a season of heavy rain.

Ten years after Dias had sailed around the Cape another Portuguese explorer was given a fleet of ships by the Portuguese King. His name was Vasco da Gama. The king instructed him to find the trade route around Africa to India.

Vasco da Gama left on his first voyage from Lisbon, Portugal with four ships and 170 men on July 8, 1497. The expedition rounded the southern tip of Africa at the Cape of Good Hope on November 22. This was just over 4 months later.

He then headed north up the east coast of Africa. They stopped at trading ports on the way, including Mombasa and Malindi. These were separate city states then. Today they are cities in modern day Kenya.

In Malindi, they picked up a local navigator who knew the direction to India. With the help of a monsoon wind they were able to cross the Indian Ocean and arrive in Calicut in India which is now called Kozhikode in less than a month.

In Calicut, da Gama ran into serious trouble when trying to trade. The reason being he had brought items of very little value in his ships. This led the local traders to become suspicious of him and very soon he had to leave.
His voyage back was disastrous! Almost half of his crew died of scurvy as the trip back took much longer due to the winds not blowing in his favour. When he returned home, he was still a hero. He had found the much needed trade route to India.

On da Gama’s second trip he commanded two more fleets to India. The second trip was more of a military expedition. He managed to capture Arab ships and tried to show how mighty the Portuguese navy was.

On his third voyage he was going to take over as viceroy of Portuguese India. He died of malaria shortly after arriving.

**Journey of the VOC (Dutch East India Company)**

The spice trade was dominated by the Portuguese for about 100 years. They wanted to keep other European countries out of the East but this did last forever. The next European nation that came to dominate the spice trade was the Dutch.

This was done through a private company called The Dutch East India Company or the VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie). The VOC was started in 1602 and was given the sole right to trade with Asia by the government of the Netherlands (Holland). This meant that they were the only company that could trade there.

Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa in 1652 to establish a base there. He was sent by the VOC. The base was set up to resupply VOC ships with all they needed on their journey to East Asia. This was later made a conventional colony when Europeans started to settle there.
Hundreds of ships that belonged to the VOC were involved in thousands of very profitable trips. Millions and millions of dollars were made by the VOC over the years. This helped the Dutch to develop a colonial empire in the East. The local people in the colonial empire often suffered great hardships at the hands of the Dutch and the VOC.

Activity 8
1. What was the English name for the VOC?
2. Why was the VOC formed?
3. Why did the Dutch set up a base in the Cape?

Life of a sailor on a VOC ship

Life for sailors on board a VOC ship was very hard. Their living quarters were very small. Officers had their own cabins, but the sailors just slept wherever they could find a space. If they were unlucky, they could end up spending a cold night up on deck. It often took many months to get to the East.

Food on the ships was not very good and many sailors got scurvy because they did not eat enough fruit and vegetables.

Bibliography: K Angier, D Carr, J Cockburn and J Wallace – Our World, Our Society Grade 6