

# First Names: Ferdinand

## A Teaching Guide

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### INTRODUCTION

Dear Teachers

Thank you for reading **First Names: Ferdinand** with your class!

When my publisher asked me if there was a historical figure that I would like to write about for the series, Ferdinand Magellan immediately sprung to mind. Magellan is a figure all Filipinos are familiar with because for a long time (and I believe to this day in some places), histories of the Philippines started with the discovery of our islands by Magellan in 1521. And following that, our history was written by colonial powers which of course was mainly about *their* experiences, *their* stories, *their* perspectives. In these narratives, we indigenous people only learn about ourselves in glimpses and

asides. In fact, I studied the European drive to find the East Indies for ages before it dawned on me that my native country was actually THE East Indies.

So it was a privilege to write this biography. As someone who was “discovered” by Magellan, I was acutely sensitive to how a child might respond to the information. So I try to remind the reader that Magellan’s actions were not just adventurous, but had a devastating impact on the people he encountered. That impact has lasted centuries, as we Filipinos can attest. Most children’s biographies of Magellan portray him as a strong, heroic figure. But while his achievement was incredible, he was more complex than that – his voyage was driven by his experiences of rejection and disappointment. Which I think, strangely, makes him a more sympathetic character.

I created this video in anticipation that I would not be able to visit schools in person during this Pandemic. I hope it will be a great introduction to **First Names: Ferdinand** and will inspire your pupils to dig deeper ... leading to your own Age of Exploration.

Candy Gourlay



## POP CULTURE NARRATIVES

Teachers may find it useful to compare the Age of Exploration story with pop culture narratives that the children are familiar with. Please note that I deliberately avoid using the Age of Discovery out of respect for the cultures European explorers encountered (this in itself might be something interesting to discuss with the children).

### Star Trek

TV and movie franchise following the adventures of the USS Enterprise, a starship on a mission, the purpose of which was "to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before". How did the Star Trek crew treat aliens from other planets? Were the hostile aliens justified in being hostile? It would be an interesting way to describe human reactions to “first contact”, when people meet others from unknown cultures. My novel Bone Talk, about a headhunter tribal boy who meets US invasion forces for the first time, also covers this theme.

### Doctor Who

The adventures of a Time Lord in a time travelling space ship called a Tardis. The Doctor Who universe is populated by extraterrestrial civilizations in conflict over time and space and the Doctor works to save

these civilizations, especially Earth. What are most civilizations competing for in Doctor Who when they come into conflict? This might be a good way to talk about how scarce resources drive invasion and competition.

### **Lost in Space**

The Netflix series imagines space colonists whose spaceship veers off course. The series relies on the characters getting themselves out of sticky situations using technology. This might be an interesting way to discuss how technology enables exploration and invasion. A recurring figure is a robot who befriends the child characters. There is a constant discussion about whether the robot is machine or human, that takes its inspiration from the attitudes in the Age of Exploration, when explorers like Magellan did not regard more primitive people as human.

## **LOOKING AT THE AGE OF EXPLORATION THROUGH DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES**

I think it's important to be aware that the chapters on Columbus, Vasco Da Gama and Ferdinand's participation in the conquest of the Indian Ocean may upset children of non European heritage. When I was researching it myself, I found the Portuguese and Spanish invasions horrifying, what more a child who realises this happened to her own people? And what about children with European heritage? How would they react to this information? How can a teacher prepare and mitigate?

- Comparing and contrasting European culture with other cultures during Magellan's lifetime (1490 to 1521) is eye opening and even amusing.
  - It was unusual for Europeans to bathe their bodies. More commonly, they changed and washed their linen underclothes. They carried pomanders filled with spices to cover up their smell (The Clean Body: A Modern History by Peter Ward)
  - One of the luxury goods that was blocked by the Ottoman Empire was the China plate.
  - Europeans didn't use forks until way after Magellan's death. Men carried small knives which they used to eat with.
  - When Vasco Da Gama tried to trade with the African and Indian kingdoms he visited, he brought along trivial trinkets, thinking they would easily impress primitive people. But the people he found were not primitive at all but sophisticated, ancient cultures. They were outraged and insulted and several times, Da Gama was chased out of the kingdoms. "Have you no gold?" the Zamorin of Calicut cried. Later, the Indians decided da Gama was just an ordinary pirate and demanded customs duty.
  - Indian, Muslim and other scientists and scholars (see Ferdinand Explains The Shape of the World) were ahead of Europe in determining such things as the circumference of the Earth.
- The Indian Ocean had been a bustling (and peaceful) trade route for hundreds of years before the Portuguese brought war. I had grown up being told that Europeans brought trade and wealth to Asia. When in fact they brought war and then extracted wealth.

- It would help to bolster your knowledge by watching this episode of Civilizations where David Olusoga shows how art was always on the frontline when distant cultures meet.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05xyfg6>
- This is a fun video about Christopher Columbus that pokes fun at the explorers but also is revealing about their vanity.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kmwriy3a6sc>
- The Crash Course channel has brilliant videos that decolonize traditional narratives of the Age of Exploration (it's also a great source for quickie and engaging historical explanations):  
[The Age of Exploration: Crash Course European History](#)  
[Columbus, de Gama, and Zheng He! 15th Century Mariners. Crash Course: World History](#)

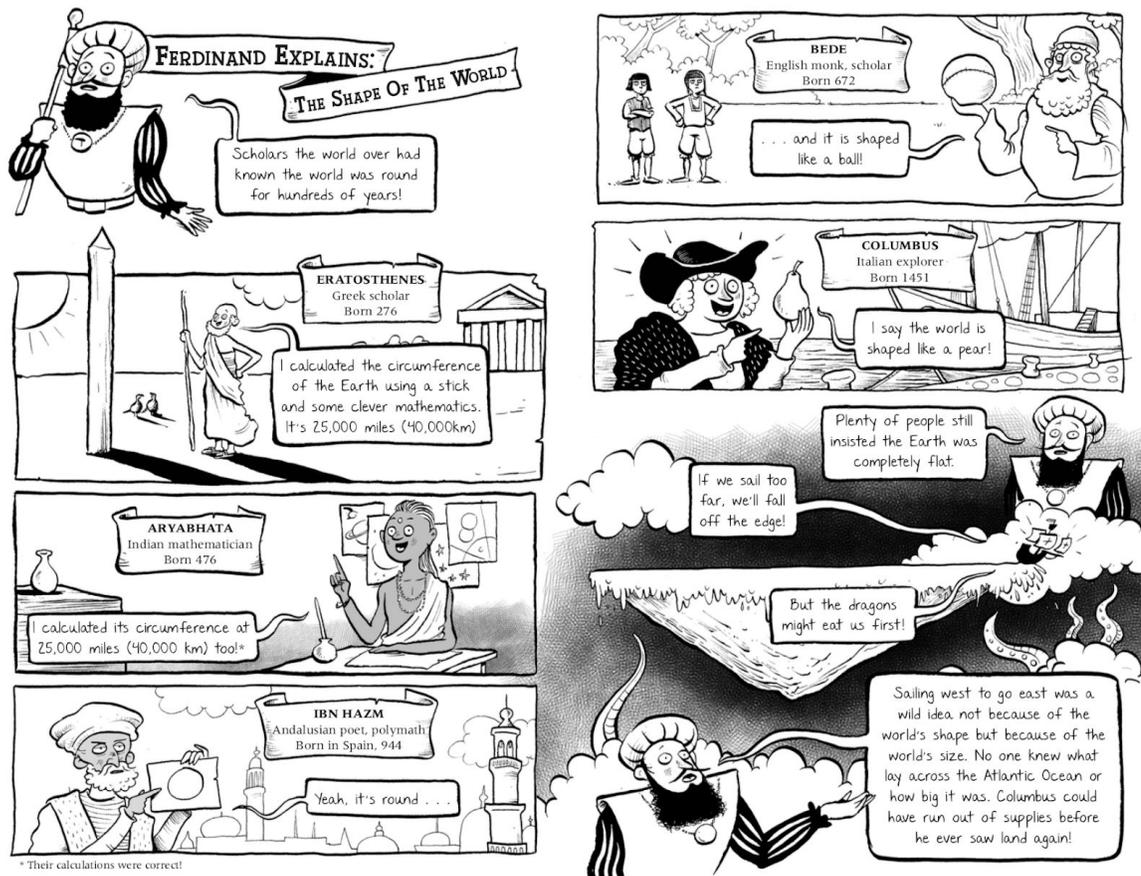
### FOCUSING ON FOOD

- The desire for spices was a powerful motivation for Europeans to sail to unknown lands and waters. Investigate some of the spices and their uses in the age of exploration
- The Age of Exploration brought new foods to Europe:
  1. Investigate where these foods came from. Eg. tomatoes were brought back to Europe by Spanish Conquistadores
  2. Discuss the circumstances of their “discovery” Eg. The Spanish Conquest of the Aztecs
  3. Look up dishes from the food’s original source Eg. Mexican tomato based dishes
  4. What do we cook tomatoes with now?

### MAPS TELL US ABOUT PEOPLE NOT JUST PLACES

So much to talk about! So much to explore!

- I highly recommend acquiring a giant beach ball globe – this is [mine](#) ... you will need a pump!
- Discussing how people realized the world was not flat is a fun side topic. And it is interesting to see people from different civilizations coming to that conclusion independently while people like Columbus continued to believe wacky things (he really thought the world was shaped like a pear)



## MAP QUIZ ANSWERS

- My First Names: Ferdinand video includes a quiz about maps. Here are the correct answers:
  - **The Peutinger Map - 29BC**  
The Peutinger Map is a long, long scroll (1 foot 1in x 22.1 feet). It was created in the Roman times, perhaps between 29BC and 12BC but the actual surviving map is a copy made in the 12th century. You can see different sections of it here:  
[http://www.hs-augsburg.de/%7Eharsch/Chronologia/Lspost03/Tabula/tab\\_pe00.html](http://www.hs-augsburg.de/%7Eharsch/Chronologia/Lspost03/Tabula/tab_pe00.html)
  - **Ptolemy's Map - 2nd Century**  
This is a map of the known world to Hellenistic society in Ptolemy's time. The image I used in the video was constructed in the 16th century, based on Ptolemy's coordinates in his book, The Geographia.
  - **The Ebstorfer Map - 13th century**  
The Ebstorfer Map is an example of a mappa mundi, a Medieval European map of the world. It is distinctive in that it contains descriptions of animals, the creation of the world, definitions of terms and pagan and biblical history. The original Ebstorfer Map

was discovered in 1843, and was painted on goatskins sewn together. The image is a reconstruction after the original was destroyed in World War II.

○ **Shanha Yudi Quantu - 1609**

This was created by Chinese cartographers in the century after the Age of Exploration, with additional information from Jesuit missionaries to China. Many of the maps that followed in Asia after this time are based on the Shanha Yudi Quantu. More great detail about the map on [Wikipedia](#)

○ **The Theatrum Orbis Terrarum - 1570**

The first modern Atlas, made up of bound map sheets. This was the first time that the entirety of Western European knowledge of the world was brought together in one book.

## THE TECHNOLOGY THAT DROVE THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

- I highly recommend getting a copy of **Into the Unknown: How Great Explorers Found Their Way by Land, Sea and Air** by Stewart Ross and Stephen Biesty because you can then distribute photocopy pages for discussion under your schools ALCS licensing subscription. Here is the [Amazon link](#)
- Virtually explore the [Mary Rose Museum](#) in Portsmouth, which not only displays an example of a carrack but artifacts from the same era as Ferdinand Magellan. It is my favourite museum in the UK! Visit the Mary Rose's [Artifacts Gallery](#) (collection of objects found on the Mary Rose) and [Ship Gallery](#) (images of the Mary Rose)
- You can search the [V&A collections](#) for artifacts from The Age of Exploration.

## SHIPS QUIZ: ANSWERS

**A - The Viking Longship**

**C - The Trinidad**

**B - The Treasure Ship**

**D - The Caravel**

## NOTICE AND WONDER TEACHING STRATEGY

I read about the Notice and Wonder teaching strategy in a New York Times educational series called [What's Going On in This Graph?](#) which helped teachers use New York Times graphs and diagrams as a platform for Maths teaching. The students were asked to look carefully at the diagrams and think about, among others, these two questions:

- What do you notice?
- What do you wonder? *What are you curious about what you notice?*

The students then conclude with “The story this graph is telling is ...”

It struck me that this would be a terrific way to encourage critical thinking when exploring history like the Age of Exploration. Reading up on the Notice and Wonder® strategy led me to this presentation by teacher Annie Fetter [@mfannie](#) called [Ever Wonder What They'd Notice?](#) I encourage you to watch it.

