

Name: _____

SPICE ROUTES

In “Spice It Up!” (p. 14), you read about how spices give gingerbread its flavor. Today you can buy most spices inexpensively at the grocery store, but centuries ago these substances were rare and extremely valuable in places like Europe. Because few flavorful spices grow in Europe, people took long journeys to far-off lands to obtain them. Merchants sent ships to collect spices and then sold them in Europe, making a fortune. At one point, spices like nutmeg were worth more than gold. The search for spices was one reason explorers set sail, and it played an important role in the growth of empires in Europe.

The map below shows some of the spice routes European merchants followed in the late Middle Ages, between the 9th and 16th centuries. Study the map and then answer the questions that follow.



SOURCE: SMITHSONIAN.COM

ANALYZE IT

1. In what type of climate do you think spices grow? Cite evidence from the map to support your answer.
2. Explain how geography influenced the value of spices in the Middle Ages.
3. In the late Middle Ages, merchants in Venice controlled most of the spice trade in Europe. Describe a possible route a Venetian merchant may have taken to obtain pepper and then sell it in London.
4. Explain how the location of Venice helped it benefit from the spice trade.
5. In the late Middle Ages, many European civilizations began expanding their empires through *colonization*. They set up colonies in distant lands and seized control from the local people. How do you think the spice trade influenced colonization?