

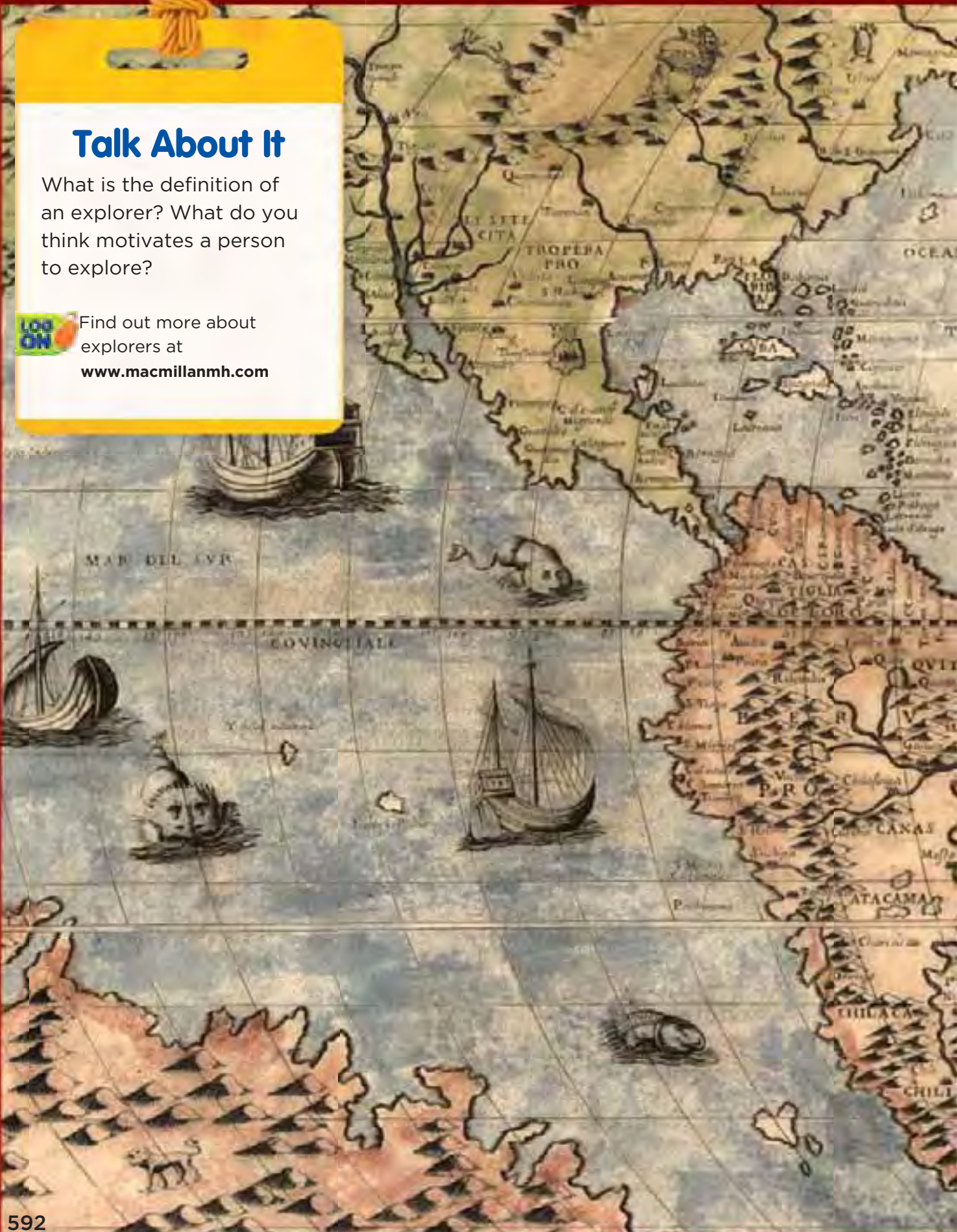
Talk About It

What is the definition of an explorer? What do you think motivates a person to explore?



Find out more about explorers at

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Explorations

Vocabulary

period

vessels

valuable

documenting

estimated

BACK IN TIME WITH SPANISH EXPLORERS

The sixteenth century was a **period** of great exploration by European countries. Facing known and unknown dangers, explorers set sail in the best sea-going **vessels** of their day. Many of those explorers who set sail for North America were from Spain.



**The *Santa Maria*,
Columbus's flagship**

1492-1500:

Christopher Columbus, sailing under the Spanish flag, explores the area around the Caribbean Sea.

1508: Juan Ponce de León travels to Puerto Rico.

1510: Diego Velázquez de Cuellar and 300 men conquer Cuba.

1513: Ponce de León is the first European to land in Florida.

1513: Vasco Núñez de Balboa is the first European to see the Pacific Ocean.

1518: Hernán Cortés leaves Cuba to explore Mexico.

1519: Alonso Álvarez de Pineda claims Texas for Spain.

1520: Álvarez de Pineda proves Florida is not an island but part of a gigantic continent instead.

1542: Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca publishes a book about his travels in what is now Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico.

1539 to 1542: Hernando de Soto is the first European to see the Mississippi River.

1592: Juan de Fuca sails up the west coast of North America from Mexico to Vancouver Island.

1602: Sebastián Vizcaíno finds Monterey Bay and sets the scene for the settlement of what we now call California.

Tales of the Taino

Deep in a forest of the Dominican Republic is an unusual well. It contained more than 240 objects—chairs, jars, baskets, and bowls—that are at least 500 years old. Far from being worthless, these old everyday objects are extremely **valuable**. They are giving scientists new information about the Taino (tie•EE•no).

The Taino were people who lived throughout the Caribbean, including the countries now called Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. When European explorers started arriving in the Caribbean in 1492, the lives of the Taino were changed forever. Explorers took their land. Many of the Taino were killed. By the 1520s very little was left of the Taino civilization except some artifacts and a few words. *Hurricane*, *barbecue*, and *canoe* are Taino words we still use today.

Scientists and historians are **documenting**—making a record of—and studying the items from the well. After 500 years of silence, it seems that the story of the Taino will finally be told.



This carved figure represents a Taino idol or god.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States. That means it belongs to the U.S. but is not one of the 50 states. Puerto Rico is located in the Caribbean Sea, southeast of Miami, Florida. It consists of the island of Puerto Rico and the smaller islands of Vieques, Culebra, and Mona.

Capital: **San Juan**

Land area: **3,459 square miles**

Estimated population: **3,886,000**

Languages: **Spanish and English**



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