

- 8 Read the short essay below and answer the question.
What does the writer think would have happened if China had reached the Americas before the Europeans?

WHAT IF ... Chinese explorers had landed in the Americas first?

At one time, China led the world in technology. Centuries before Europe, the Chinese had printing and gunpowder. They also had the compass, which meant they could navigate without relying on the position of the moon. Furthermore, they were brilliant shipbuilders. This ability to build large, strong ships went hand in hand with their other talent: exploration.

In 1405, a Chinese explorer named Zheng He went on a journey. The idea was to create new trade routes for China. On his first trip, he took 28,000 men in 62 ships. Zheng He landed in India and brought home many things that were new to the Chinese: plants, animals, even people.

Zheng He made seven westward journeys. If he had continued to explore, he would probably have reached the Americas before Columbus and the Europeans. However, for political reasons, China stopped exploring. Its leaders believed that China didn't need to trade with other nations, so the country became isolated.

Now, let's imagine Zheng He had reached the Americas first. What would have happened? He would have seen the incredible size of the country and the riches in the ground. He probably would have returned with more men and maybe gone to war with Native Americans in order to steal their land. If the Chinese had won, they would have become rich. The new Chinese colony would have grown and grown, and perhaps they would have later spread to other lands.

Would China have created the next great empire if Chinese explorers had landed in the Americas first? We will never know.