

CAPTAIN COOK

Captain James Cook was a great explorer. Before he started exploring, maps of the Pacific Ocean were almost empty. He visited hundreds of islands and put them in the correct places on the map. He made maps of the coastlines of Australia and New Zealand and made them colonies of England.

On each of his three long voyages, he wrote in a journal every day. He wrote about what happened on the ship. When he visited places, he wrote details about the weather and the geography. He wrote about the people who lived there, and he described the plants and animals. His journals were full of new information about distant places.

James Cook was born in England in 1728. His parents were poor farm workers. When James was 18, he found a job on a coastal ship. He worked on ships until he was 27 years old, and then he joined the navy. He fought in Canada in a war against France, and he mapped some of the eastern coast of Canada.

In 1768 King George III made him the captain of a ship and sent him to the Pacific. He was gone for nearly three years. When he returned, he was a national hero.

For a long time, Europeans believed that there was a great southern continent south of the equator. They thought it covered most of what is really the South Pacific Ocean. In 1772 Cook went to the Pacific again to find this continent. He tried to sail from New Zealand to the southern tip of South America but there was too much ice. However, he was the first person to cross the Antarctic Circle, and of course he discovered that there was no great southern continent.

He started his third voyage in 1776. On this trip he was the first European to visit Hawaii. Then he mapped the west coast of North America. He crossed the Arctic Circle and saw Eskimos.

When he finished mapping the North America coast, he returned to Hawaii. There was some trouble between the Hawaiians and the white men and they started fighting. Captain Cook was killed. The fighting was a mistake, and the Hawaiians were very sorry.

When Captain Cook died, the world lost one of the greatest explorers in history.