

# Captain James Cook

James Cook was born in Marton-in-Cleveland, England on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1728. His father was a farm worker. At the age of 18, he became a merchant sailor. He soon changed to the navy and began a successful career.

## First Voyage

In 1768, Cook became the commander of a voyage to the Pacific. Cook's ship was called the Endeavour. His first job was to sail to Tahiti and observe the planet Venus pass in front of the Sun. He was also given an envelope with secret instructions. The instructions told him to find New Holland (Australia). Also on board were astronomer Charles Green and botanist Joseph Banks. After Tahiti, Cook first visited New Zealand then New Holland.



## Cook Arrives in Australia

He first stopped at Botany Bay, where he studied the animals, plants and local people.

He then sailed up the coast. Unfortunately, while he was travelling near the Great Barrier Reef, his ship was damaged by the coral reef. Once his ship was repaired, he sailed to Cape York. At Cape York, he claimed New Holland to be part of the British Empire.

Cook and his crew returned to England in 1771.

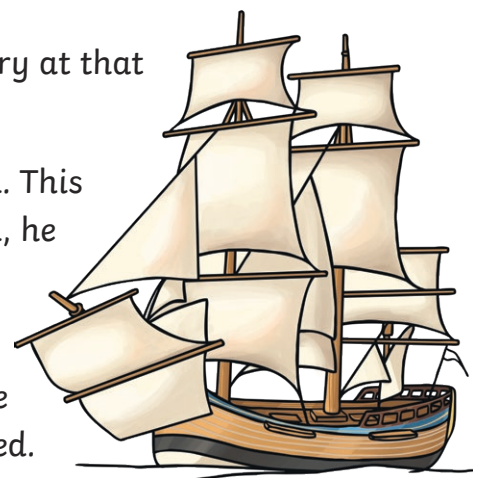
## Later Voyages

Cook went on two more voyages.

In 1772, he sailed farther south than any other human in history at that time. He also visited Easter Island.

In 1776, he tried to sail around the top of North America to Asia. This was called the Northwest Passage. He was unsuccessful. Instead, he sailed on to Hawaii.

In Hawaii, Cook and his men got along with the local people at first. Then someone stole one of Cook's boats. To get it back, he kidnapped a chief. The local people attacked and Cook was killed.



# Questions

1. Where was Captain James Cook born? Tick one.

- ☐ Australia
- ☐ England
- ☐ New Zealand

2. How old was he when he became a merchant sailor? Tick one.

- ☐ 18
- ☐ 19
- ☐ 20

3. What was the name of Cook's ship? Tick one.

- ☐ Endeavour
- ☐ Adventure
- ☐ Enterprise

4. Where was Cook killed? Tick one.

- ☐ England
- ☐ Easter Island
- ☐ Hawaii

5. Fill in the missing words in the sentence below.

After Tahiti, Cook first visited \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_.

6. What island did Cook visit in 1772?

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7. Why was Cook killed?

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# Answers

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- ☒ **England**
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- ☐ England
- ☐ Easter Island
- ☒ **Hawaii**

5. Fill in the missing words in the sentence below.

After Tahiti, Cook first visited **New Zealand** then **New Holland**.

6. What island did Cook visit in 1772?

**Cook visited Easter Island in 1772.**

7. Why was Cook killed?

**Cook was killed because he kidnapped a chief. The local people attacked and Cook was killed.**

# Captain James Cook

Captain James Cook was born in Yorkshire, England on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1728. His father was a farm labourer. At the age of 18, however, he chose to join the merchant navy instead of following in his father's footsteps. Later, he joined the navy and rapidly rose through the ranks.

## First Voyage

In 1768, Cook was made the commander of a ship called the Endeavour. His job was to sail to Tahiti. His task was to take scientific observations of a rare astronomical event. Before he left, he was given secret instructions in an envelope. The instructions told him to explore the land known as New Holland (Australia). The astronomer Charles Green and botanist Joseph Banks were also on board the Endeavour.



After successfully reaching Tahiti, Cook continued to sail west. First, he reached New Zealand, where he mapped the main islands. The crew spotted New Holland for the first time in April. Cook arrived at Botany Bay ten days later. While he was here, he studied the plants and animals and observed the local people.

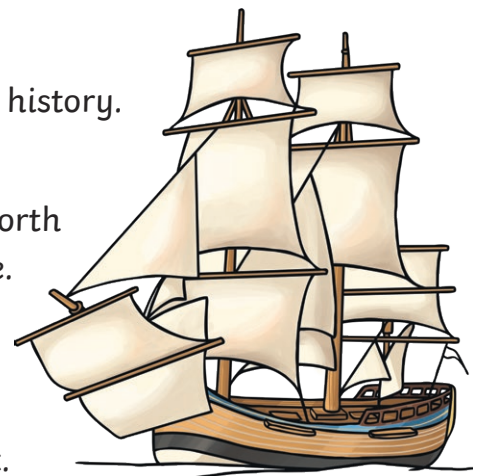
He sailed north up the coast of New Holland after leaving Botany Bay. Unfortunately, coral on the Great Barrier Reef damaged his ship, and he had to stop for repairs. He sailed on and eventually reached Cape York. While he was there, he claimed New Holland was now part of the British Empire. After this, he and his crew returned to England in 1771.

## Later Voyages

Cook would take part in two later explorations.

In 1772, he sailed farther south than any other human in history. He also visited Easter Island for the first time.

In 1776, he set out to find a route around the top of North America to Asia. This route was called the Northwest Passage. Unfortunately, he was unsuccessful. Undeterred, he sailed to Hawaii. At first, he had good relations with the local people. However, a conflict happened when some locals stole a boat. Cook was killed by a stab wound during a fight about the boat.



# Questions

1. What did Cook join at the age of 18?

- ☐ merchant navy
- ☐ the army
- ☐ a farming community

2. Draw a line to complete the sentences.

In Hawaii,

Cook was made the commander  
of a ship called the Endeavour.

In 1768,

were also on board the  
Endeavour.

The astronomer Charles  
Green and botanist  
Joseph Banks

Cook was killed.

3. Why did Cook sail to Tahiti?

- ☐ He was sent to claim it for the British Empire.
- ☐ He was sent to observe a rare astronomical event.
- ☐ He was ordered to study the plants, animals and people.

4. What did Cook do after he tried to sail through the Northwest Passage?

- ☐ He visited New Zealand.
- ☐ He sailed to Hawaii.
- ☐ He sailed to Easter Island.

5. What was the name of Cook's ship?

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6. What were Cook's secret instructions?

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7. What events led to Cook's death in Hawaii?

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8. Do you think Cook was an important explorer? Use ideas from the text to explain your answer.

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# Answers

1. What did Cook join at the age of 18?

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- ☐ the army
- ☐ a farming community

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In Hawaii,	•	•	Cook was made the commander of a ship called the Endeavour.
In 1768,	•	•	were also on board the Endeavour.
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3. Why did Cook sail to Tahiti?

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- ☒ **He was sent to observe a rare astronomical event.**
- ☐ He was ordered to study the plants, animals and people.

4. What did Cook do after he tried to sail through the Northwest Passage?

- ☐ He visited New Zealand.
- ☒ **He sailed to Hawaii.**
- ☐ He sailed to Easter Island.

5. What was the name of Cook's ship?

**Cook's ship was called the Endeavour**

6. What were Cook's secret instructions?

**The instructions told him to explore the land known as New Holland (Australia).**

7. What events led to Cook's death in Hawaii?

**A conflict happened when some locals stole a boat. Cook was killed by a stab wound during the battle.**

8. Do you think Cook was an important explorer? Use ideas from the text to explain your answer.

**Answers will vary, for example: I think Cook was an important explorer because he was one of the first Europeans to explore Australia.**

# Captain James Cook

James Cook was an Englishman born on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1728 in a small village near Middlesbrough in Yorkshire. At the age of 18, he joined the merchant navy then he later switched to the navy.

He rapidly rose through the navy ranks and, in 1768, he was made the commander of a ship called the Endeavour. Cook was told to sail to Tahiti to observe the transit of the planet Venus in front of the Sun, a rare event visible only in the southern hemisphere. At the same time, however, he was given some secret instructions in an envelope that told him to explore the uncharted New Holland, the country known today as Australia. Also on board the Endeavour were the astronomer Charles Green and the botanist Joseph Banks.

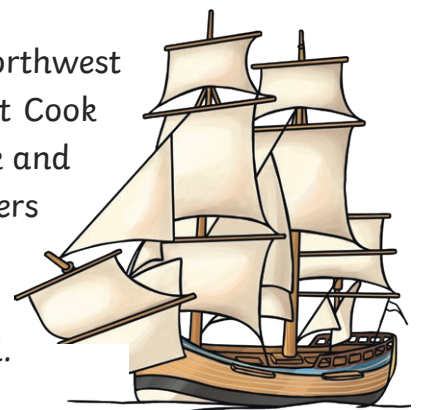


The crew of the Endeavour continued to sail farther west after their work in Tahiti. Cook reached New Zealand, where he circumnavigated the islands. On 19<sup>th</sup> April 1770, the crew glimpsed New Holland. On 29<sup>th</sup> April 1770, the expedition party landed at Botany Bay. He collected plants and flowers, and he observed the Indigenous Australians. He then travelled farther north along the coast; however, his ship was damaged by coral on the Great Barrier Reef. After a brief stay, his ship received repairs, and he continued towards Cape York - the northernmost point in Australia.

Cook claimed Australia to be part of the British Empire. He based his decision on a European understanding of land ownership. He could not see any fences, buildings or other features that would indicate land ownership. As a result, he assumed that the land did not belong to anyone and he could claim it for Great Britain. After a brief stay in Jakarta, Cook and his crew returned home. They arrived in Britain in July 1771 to great acclaim.

Cook would embark on two further voyages of exploration. The first would depart England in 1772 and see him explore farther south than any human had ever done before. He would also visit Easter Island, home to the famous Moai statues.

His third and final voyage left England in 1776 in search of the Northwest Passage around North America to Asia. It was on this journey that Cook met his end. After unsuccessfully exploring the coast of Alaska, Cook and his crew reached Hawaii. Although the Hawaiians and the explorers initially got on well, the relationship worsened when the Indigenous people stole an English boat. Cook kidnapped a Hawaiian chief in an attempt to get the boat back. During the fight, Cook was stabbed.



# Questions

1. 'He rapidly rose through the navy ranks...'  
What does the word **rapidly** mean?

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2. In what year did Cook become the commander of the Endeavour? Tick one.

- ☐ 1748  
☐ 1758  
☐ 1768

3. Match each question to the correct answer.

Where was Cook's ship  
damaged?

Easter Island

Where did Cook land on  
29<sup>th</sup> April 1770?

Botany Bay

Where did Cook visit in  
1772?

The Great Barrier Reef

4. Name two things that Cook was asked to do on his voyage to Tahiti.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Fill in the missing words in the sentence below.

Also on board the Endeavour were the astronomer \_\_\_\_\_  
and the botanist \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Why did Cook assume that the land in Australia did not belong to anyone?

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7. Find and copy a word from the fifth paragraph which means ***enthusiastic public praise***.

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8. What events led to Cook's death in Hawaii?

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9. Do you think Cook was a significant explorer? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

1. 'He rapidly rose through the navy ranks...'

What does the word **rapidly** mean?

**Rapidly means that something has happened quickly.**

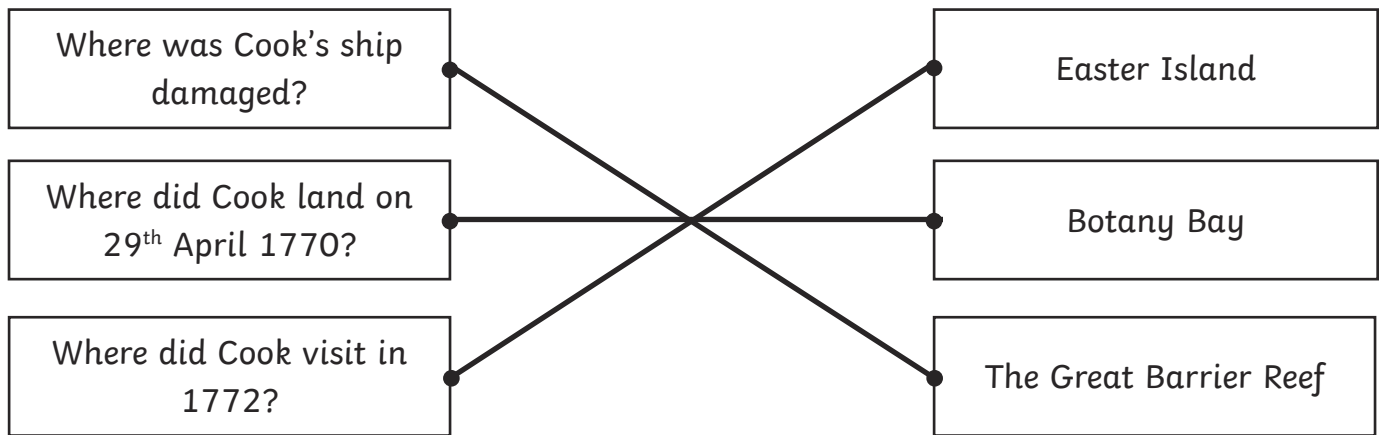
2. In what year did Cook become the commander of the Endeavour? Tick one.

☐ 1748

☐ 1758

☒ **1768**

3. Match each question to the correct answer.



4. Name two things that Cook was asked to do on his voyage to Tahiti.

**1. To observe the transit of the planet Venus across the Sun.**

**2. To explore the uncharted New Holland, the country known today as Australia.**

5. Fill in the missing words in the sentence below.

Also on board the Endeavour were the astronomer **Charles Green** and the botanist **Joseph Banks**.

6. Why did Cook assume that the land in Australia did not belong to anyone?

**Cook based his decision on a European understanding of land ownership. He could not see any fences, buildings or other features that would indicate land ownership. As a result, he assumed that the land did not belong to anyone and he could claim it for Great Britain.**

7. Find and copy a word from the fifth paragraph which means **enthusiastic public praise**.

**Accept 'acclaim' only.**

8. What events led to Cook's death in Hawaii?

**Cook kidnapped a Hawaiian chief in an attempt to get the boat back. During the fight, Cook was stabbed.**

9. Do you think Cook was a significant explorer? Explain your answer.

**Answers will vary, for example: I think Cook was a significant explorer because he explored a new area of the world.**