

Captain James Cook



Who Was James Cook?

James Cook was an English explorer. He was born in 1728, near Middlesbrough, and died in 1779.

When did he start travelling?

James Cook's father was a farmer and James worked in a shop after leaving school, but aged 18, he decided to become a sailor. He spent a few years working on ships along England's coast and became a captain aged 26. He then joined the Royal Navy.

Where did he go?

In 1770, James was told to sail to **Tahiti** to watch the planet Venus. But he also had a secret mission – he had to explore around Australia. He sailed around **New Zealand** and then to Botany Bay in **Australia**, which he said was now owned by Britain. He met the people who lived there first and investigated what plants there were. Cook went on two more long voyages – to Australia, New Zealand and **Antarctica**, and to **Alaska, Canada** and **Hawaii**.

What happened to him?

When they got to Hawaii, Cook's men argued with the people who lived there. The people took one of the sailor's boats so Cook's men went to kidnap the King of Hawaii. In the fight, James Cook and four of his soldiers were killed by the king's guards.

Why is he important?

Cook's maps helped people from Europe get to Australia and New Zealand and were used by the first British people to move to live there.

Reading task – can you answer these questions?

- 1) Where did James Cook go on his travels? Can you find these places on a map or globe?
- 2) Do you think the people who lived in the places Captain Cook landed wanted him there? Why do you think this?
- 3) Why do you think his mission to Australia was a secret?
- 4) Can you draw a picture of something James Cook did or saw?

Challenge Task

Imagine you were exploring with James Cook. Write a postcard home about what you might have seen or done.