

## The search for the source of the Nile

One of the most famous stories in African history is the story of the search for the beginning of the River Nile.

Read the cartoon below to find out what all the fuss was about:

1) One of the British explorers, Richard Burton was asked to go on a trip to Africa to find out where the River Nile began in 1856. There was a race to find out more about it. Richard was very clever and spoke 29 languages!



**Sir Richard Francis Burton (Artist unknown)**

2) John Speke was born in 1827. He joined the army in 1844 and was soon sent to India. While he was in India he was also asked to go on the trip to Africa.



**John Hanning Speke (Artist: J W Wilson)**

3) When Richard found out that Speke would be going with him to Africa, he was furious! Richard explained he was angry because Speke would be of no use on the trip because he couldn't speak any African languages and knew nothing about geography. The 2 men disliked each other the

4) The trip began in Zanzibar, Tanzania. Here they hired men to help them carry all the things they would need over the coming months, including food, water, tents and guns to protect them from wild animals. One of the men they hired was called Sidi Mubarak Bombay. Sidi was a

moment they met.

very brave man who was often at the front of the group leading the way with his gun.



**Sidi Mubarak Bombay in 1860  
(Photographer: Unknown)**

5) Their journey began in 1857. On their travels they came across many Arab traders who told them about a huge lake in the North. This was a mystery to the men because nobody knew how many lakes there actually were in East Africa. Speke wanted to go and find the lake, but Burton was in charge and would not let him go.

6) Instead Burton decided to go towards the west where he found the lake that is called Lake Tanganyika today. When the two men arrived at the lake they were both very ill and had hardly any food left. Burton could not walk and Speke was nearly blind and deaf. During his trip through the jungle a beetle had entered Speke's ear and had started crawling into his head. Speke tried to dig the beetle out with a knife, but this just made the problem worse. In Speke's own words it 'was the most painful thing'.

7) Because the men were both so sick they decided to go to Tabora (in Tanzania) where they knew they could get medicine and recover. Speke soon got better but Burton was still very ill. Speke decided to leave Burton behind and went to

8) When Speke returned to Tabora, Burton was waiting for him and was not pleased. Burton had wanted to find the lake himself and was not pleased that Speke had found it first, the men had a huge argument. In England Speke became very

search for the Lake the Arab traders had told him about. Once he reached the Lake, he saw how large it was and thought it must be where the River Nile began, even though he had no evidence. He named the Lake Victoria after the Queen of England at that time.

famous for solving the mystery of the River Nile and was invited to many places to talk about his travels in Africa. In 1865 both men were invited to talk at the same place. They met each other on the afternoon of the day they would be debating and would not talk to each other. Speke left in anger and decided to go out shooting to calm down. That afternoon, Speke shot himself in an accident and later died. Both Speke and Burton are now famous for naming some of the lakes in East Africa and also arguing with each other!