MR. NUSSBAUM
LEARNING + FUN

SLANDER

For much of history, school children learning about the Age of Exploration were taught that Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon spent much of his fortune searching for the mythical Fountain of Youth. Modern historians, however, largely claim such an assertion is pure fiction. In fact, it is now thought that de Leon's name was attached to the Fountain of Youth maliciously by a man named Gonzalo Fernandez de Oveido y Valdes, who had serious political differences with de Leon and found him to be dimwitted, egocentric, and gullible. Oveido y Valdes wrote a book about the Spanish settling of America. In the book, he claimed that de Leon was foolishly deceived by Indians and spent five years searching for the Fountain of Youth. It was designed to ruin de Leon's reputation, as even in the 1500s, the thought of a fountain with waters that could make a person young forever, was thought to be ridiculous. Nevertheless, de Leon's legacy has been defined as much by his discovery of Florida as it has by his fruitless search for the fountain.

Can you relate to de Leon's experience? Has anyone ever said something about you that wasn't true? Did other people believe it? If not, or you prefer not to write about such experiences, think about an instance in literature or movies in which a character tried to ruin the reputation of another character by spreading false information (slander).