



Christopher

Columbus



Who Was Christopher Columbus?

Christopher Columbus was a famous explorer, navigator and settler. He is famous for discovering something he wasn't even looking for!





His Early Years

Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451. His family wasn't very rich; his father was a wool weaver, and also owned a cheese stall. Columbus worked on his fathers stall when he was a boy.





Off To Sea

Columbus was always interested in going to sea. When he was 13 years old he went on his first voyage. He travelled around the Mediterranean, and as far north as England and Ireland. When he was 25 he was shipwrecked along the coast of Portugal. Later he lived there with his brother.





Marriage and Children

Columbus married Filipa Moniz Perestrelo, the daughter of the Porto Santo governor and Portuguese nobleman. His son, Diego Columbus was born in 1479 or 1480. Some records say the Filipa died in 1485 but some people believe Columbus just left his wife.





Educating Himself

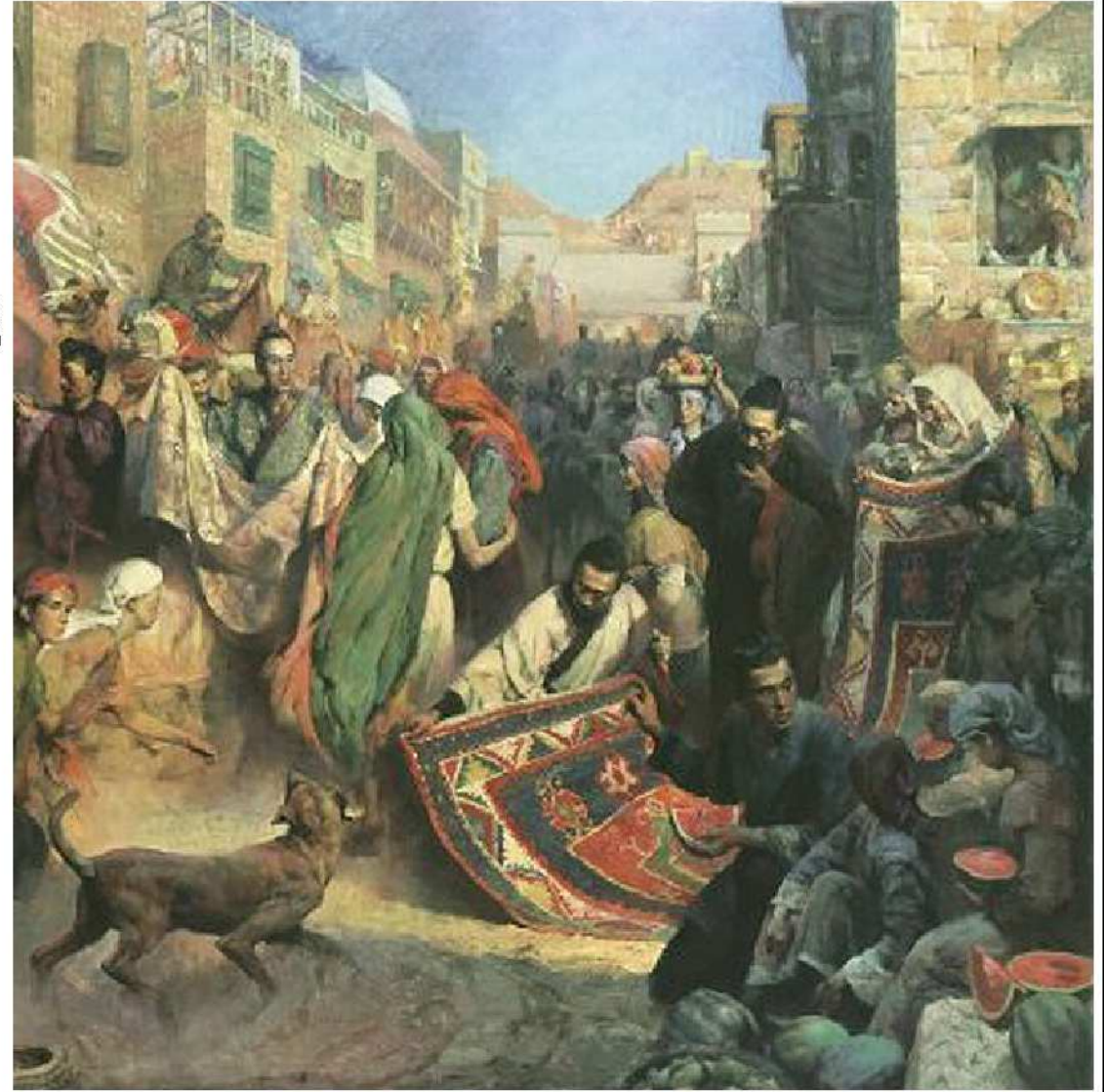
While Columbus didn't learn much as a boy, as he grew older he studied many books on astronomy, geography and history. He also learned Latin, Portuguese and Castilian. He read the Bible and liked to quote biblical texts in his letters and logs.





The Silk Road

The 'Silk Road' was an overland route, which allowed trade between Europe and Asia. In 1453 this route became much more difficult and dangerous because of the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks.





Finding a New Trade Route

Europeans needed to find a different, safer way to transport their goods to and from Asia.

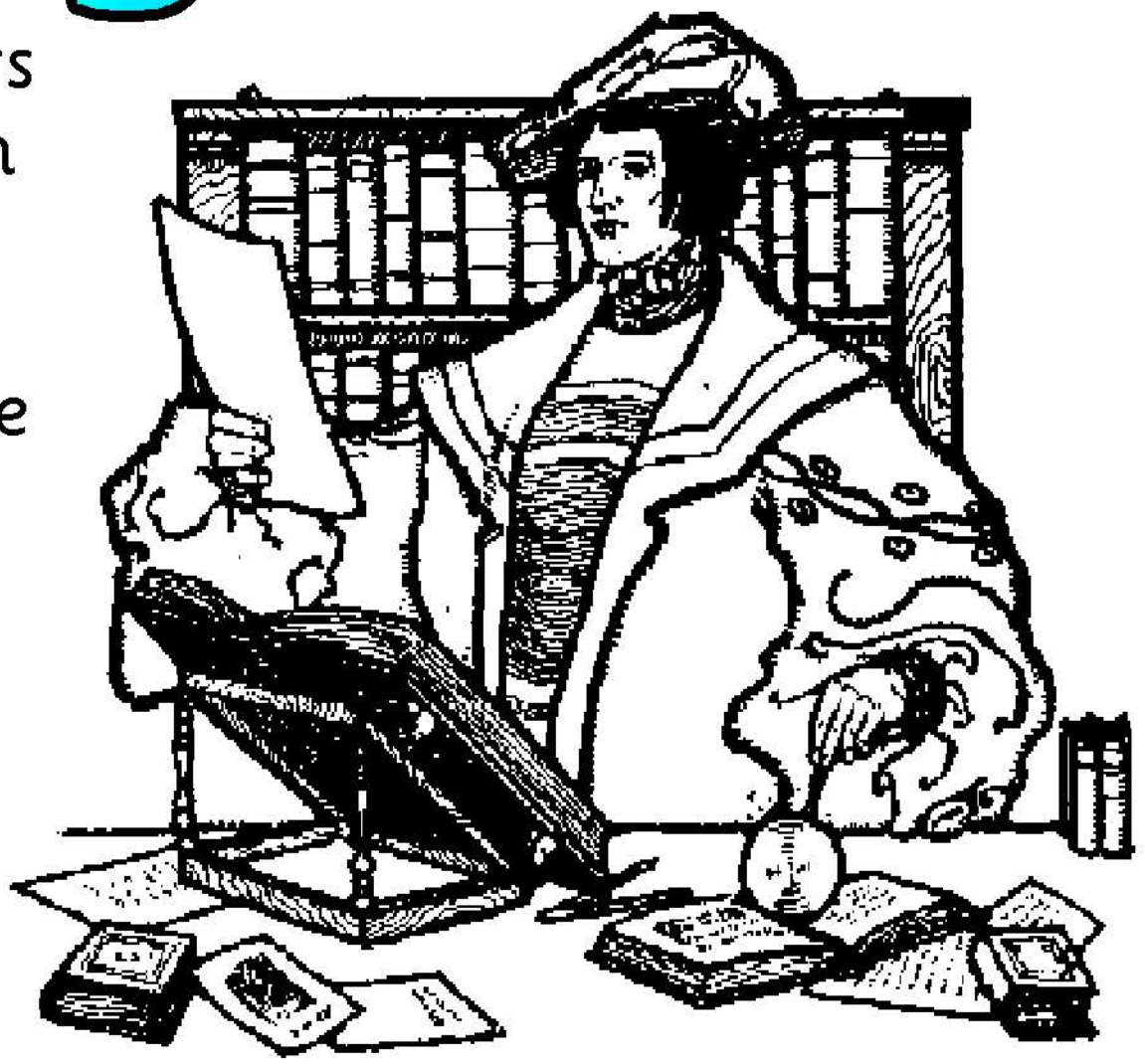
Some merchants wanted to try and sail around the southern coast of Africa, but Columbus and his brothers had a different idea.





Sailing West

Columbus and his brothers developed a different plan to reach the Indies (south and east Asia). People knew at that time that the earth was round, and Columbus thought that if he sailed west, he could travel across the "Ocean Sea" to Asia.





Finding Funds

In 1485, Columbus presented his plans to John II, King of Portugal. The king's experts rejected the plan. In 1488 Columbus appealed to the Portuguese court again but Portugal and King John still had no interest in Columbus' project.





More Fund Finding

Columbus looked for support in both Genoa and Venice, no one was interested. His brother had asked Henry VII of England for support. Henry did eventually offer an invitation to meet with Columbus but it came too late, Columbus had already committed himself to Spain.



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Funding Found!

On May 1st 1486, Columbus presented his plans to King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella of Castile, Spain. Initially their advisors rejected his proposal. After lobbying at the Spanish court for two years he finally had success in 1492.





Columbus' Contract

A contract was drawn up between Columbus and the Spanish Monarchs. The contract stated that if Columbus discovered any new islands or mainland, he would be made Viceroy and Governor of all the new lands. He would also be entitled to 10% of all the money made from those lands. Columbus also wanted to be named "Admiral of the Seas".





Setting Sail

On the evening of August 3rd, 1492, Columbus left from Palos de la Frontera with three ships: The Santa Maria, the Pinta and the Niña. The Niña was officially called the Santa Clara but is better known by her nickname, given after her owner Juan Niño of Moguer.





Land Ahoy!

A lookout on the Pinta spotted land at about 2am on October 12th 1492. Columbus said that he had seen a light on the land a few hours earlier, claiming for himself the lifetime pension promised by Ferdinand and Isabella to the first person to sight land.





Columbus' 1st Landing

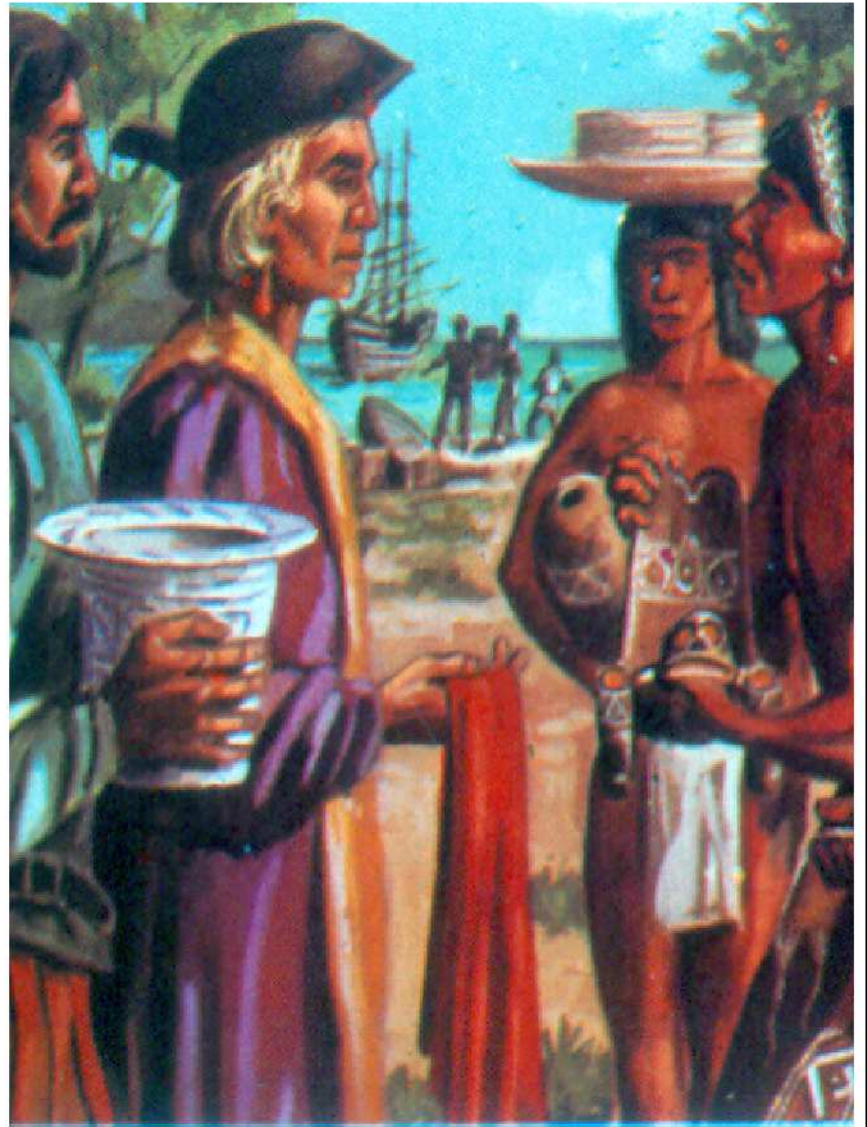
Columbus named the first island he visited San Salvador. It was in what is now called The Bahamas. No one is sure exactly which island it was. He encountered friendly native people whom he named Indians, because he believed he had arrived at the Indies, East Asia.





The First Settlement

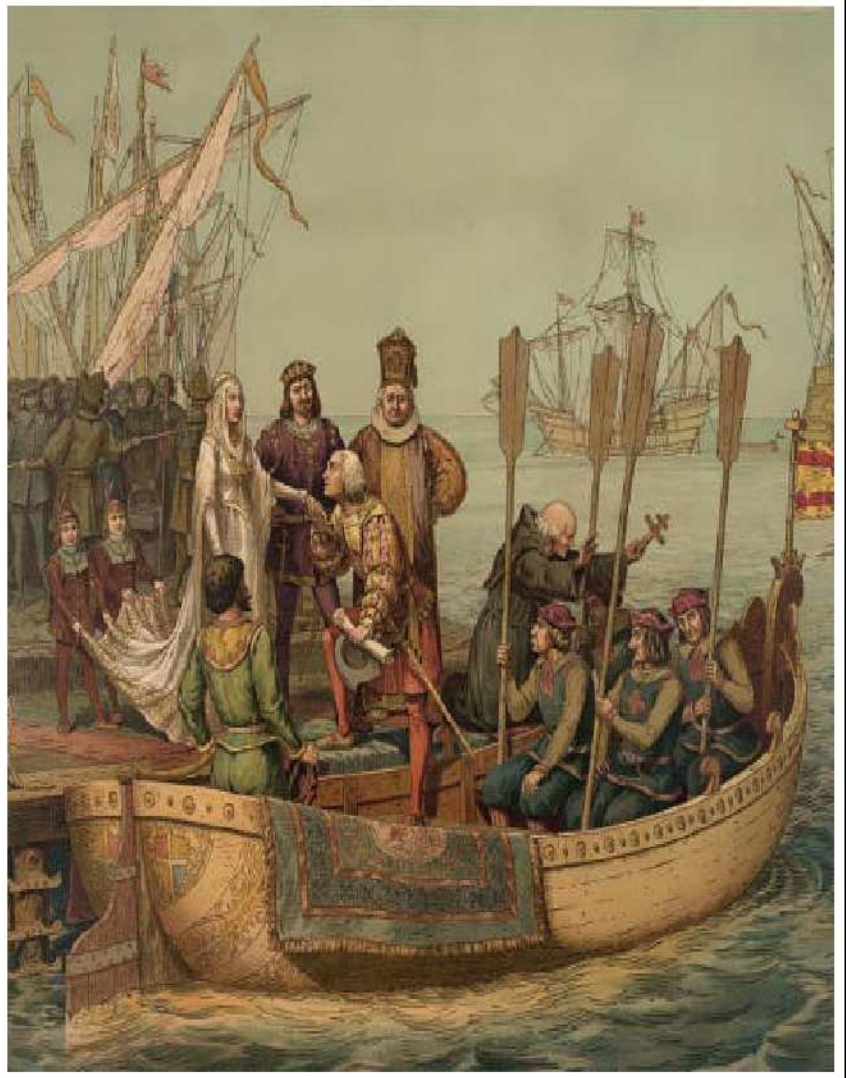
Columbus explored the northeast coast of Cuba and the northern coast of Hispaniola. On 25th December 1492, the Santa Maria ran aground on Hispaniola and had to be abandoned. The native people allowed him to leave 39 men behind on what is now known as the island of Haiti, they founded the settlement of La Navidad.





Returning Home

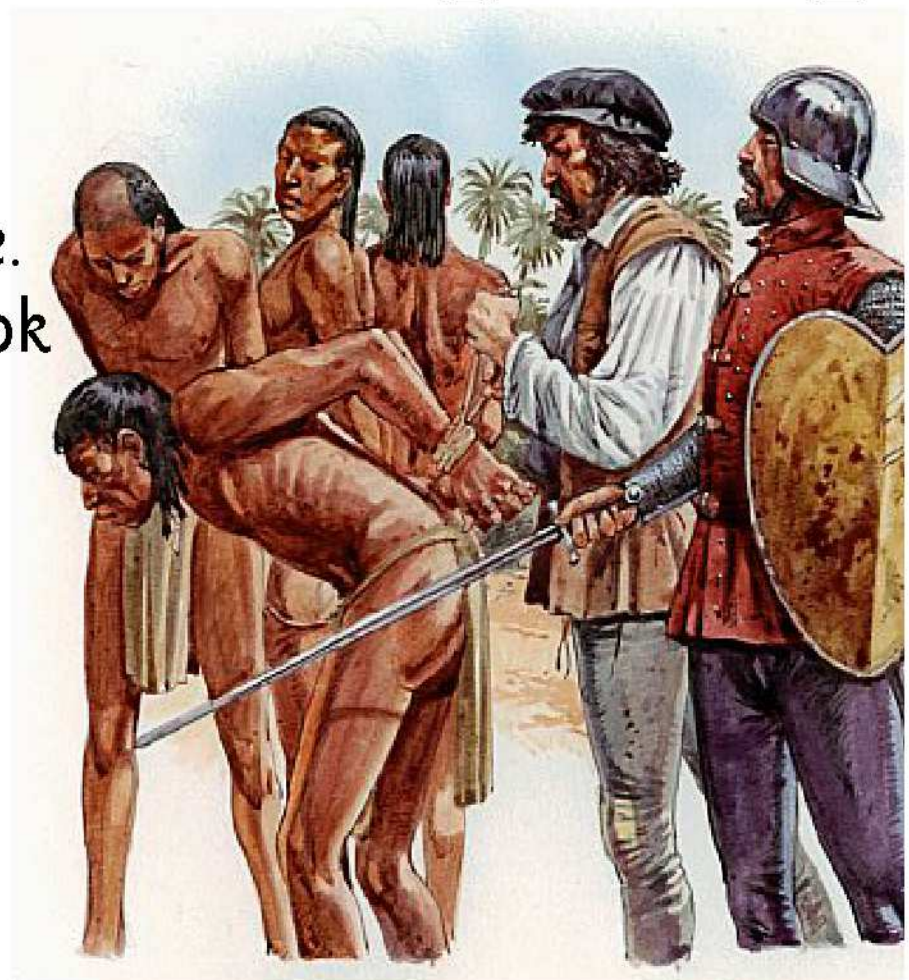
On January 13th, 1493, Columbus met some hostile natives. They shot at Columbus' men with arrows. Columbus kidnapped about 10 to 25 natives and took them back with him to Spain. He arrived home on 15th March 1493 and was welcomed as a hero. Word of his finding new lands spread rapidly throughout Europe.





Columbus' Legacy

Columbus made four return voyages to the Americas. His discovery brought about many changes to the people living there. Europeans travelled there and took land, gold and precious treasures from the native people. Over the next century entire groups of native people were wiped out, due to the diseases carried by the European visitors.





Columbus is Arrested

Columbus became governor of many of the islands he discovered. Although he was a good sailor he did not know how to run the islands. Many complaints were made against him and he was accused of treating both native people and settlers very badly. In 1500 he was arrested and sent back to Spain. Although he wasn't imprisoned, he did have all of his titles removed.





Columbus Dies

On 20th May, 1506, Columbus died, possibly of a heart attack, in Valladolid, Spain. His remains were first interred at Valladolid, then in Seville. In 1542 the remains were moved to the Dominican Republic. In 1795, when France took over the island of Hispaniola, Columbus' remains were moved back to Spain, to the Cathedral of Seville.





Remembering Columbus

Columbus is known around the world as the person who discovered the Americas. Stamps, statues, films, books and paintings have been made to remember him. Towns, streets, rivers and the American federal capital, District of Columbia, have been named after him. Columbus Day is celebrated in Spain and throughout the Americas.





The Two Log Books

On his first voyage Columbus completed two log books. In one he kept the true details of their voyage, in the other he included false information, in order to deceive the crew about the true length of the voyage. The journey took much longer than Columbus had calculated and there was almost a mutiny, just the day before land was finally sighted!





Naming The New World

Columbus refused to accept that the lands he visited, and claimed for Spain, were not part of Asia. He died without knowing he had discovered a new continent. This may be part of the reason why the American continent was named after the explorer Amerigo Vespucci and not after Columbus.

