

## Vikings & European Explorers Christopher Columbus

*In 1492,  
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.*

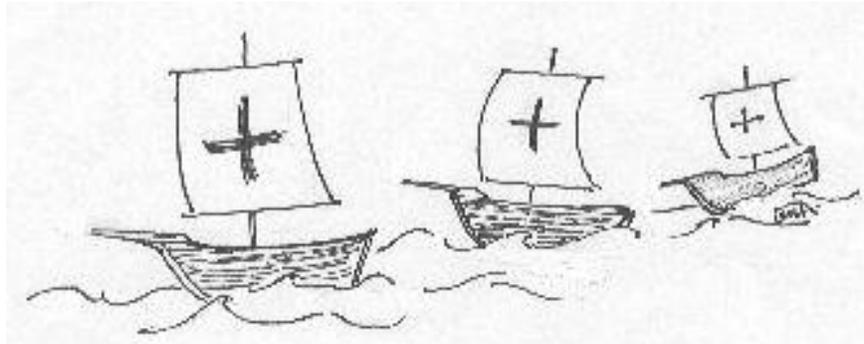


Illustration by Lynn M. Hanousek

Christopher Columbus was one of the greatest navigators of his day. His ability to explore the unknown and stick to his **vision**<sup>1</sup> changed Europe's view of the world. His discoveries brought Europe and the Americas into contact for the first time. But not everyone feels Columbus should be remembered as a hero.

Columbus became famous when he sailed west across the Atlantic Ocean in 1492. In the 1400's, Europeans were not aware that the Americas existed. They believed that if they headed west, they would run straight into Asia. Europe wanted to trade with Asia for silk, gold, and spices. However, the trip to Asia around Africa was considered too long and dangerous. Columbus wanted to find an easier and quicker route. He believed that the earth was made up of a little water and a lot of land. He thought he'd reach Asia in no time if he headed west.

Columbus convinced King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella from Spain to pay for an **expedition**.<sup>2</sup> They provided him with three ships and money to make the journey west. It took two months for the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria* to reach San Salvador in the Caribbean. However, Columbus wrongly thought he was in India. He named the people he met there "Indians." During this visit, and his next three visits, Columbus and his men brutally mistreated the Indians. They

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<sup>1</sup> **vision** – dream or plan

<sup>2</sup> **expedition** – a journey made for a special purpose

stole their land and claimed it for Spain. Their search for gold and a **passage**<sup>3</sup> to Asia never came about.

Columbus' true impact on history will be debated for years to come. Some argue he was a man of courage and great skill. Although he never did reach North America, Columbus explored the West Indies and parts of Central and South America. These explorations led to the introduction of new foods from the Americas to Europe. However, others argue Columbus treated the native people he encountered cruelly. He took land and natural resources and began a long chapter of European abuse. Despite his remarkable achievements, Columbus didn't behave like a hero at all, **critics**<sup>4</sup> argue. The **debate**<sup>5</sup> about how Columbus should be remembered continues to this day.

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<sup>3</sup> **passage** – a route or way through

<sup>4</sup> **critics** – people who find something wrong with people or things

<sup>5</sup> **debate** – discussion for or against

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. According to the text, whose discoveries brought Europe and the Americas into contact for the first time?
  - a. Vasco da Gama's discoveries
  - b. Christopher Columbus' discoveries
  - c. King Ferdinand's discoveries
  - d. Queen Isabella's discoveries
  
2. According to the passage, the word *mistreated* means
  - a. to treat badly.
  - b. to treat well.
  - c. to treat carefully.
  - d. to treat wonderfully.
  
3. Based on the passage, why will Columbus' impact on history be debated for years to come?
  - a. Most people criticize the way Columbus treated the native people he met.
  - b. Most people agree that Columbus was a courageous and skilled hero.
  - c. People have different opinions about his achievements and character.
  - d. A lot of information about Christopher Columbus is still unknown.
  
4. What may have been the author's purpose in writing this passage?
  - a. to inform the reader about Columbus and the way people view him
  - b. to persuade the reader that Columbus was a bad person
  - c. to persuade the reader that Columbus was an admirable man
  - d. to inform the reader about King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella
  
5. How was Columbus able to pay for his voyage to the Americas?
  - a. Columbus found the money.
  - b. Columbus took the money from England.
  - c. Columbus used money he had saved.
  - d. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain gave him money.

6. Explain whether Columbus was a hero. Support your opinion with information from the text.

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7. Why did Columbus sail west across the Atlantic Ocean?

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Columbus believed that he had reached India, \_\_\_\_\_ he had really reached Central and South America.

- a. because
- b. but
- c. so
- d. after

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus began the journey west by sailing on the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria.

When? in 1492

Who? \_\_\_\_\_

(did) What? \_\_\_\_\_

How? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** expedition: a journey made for a special purpose.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Teacher Guide and Answers****Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 850**Featured Text Structure:** Argumentative - the writer sets out both sides of the argument, altering how the reader perceives a topic or issue

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  - a. Columbus found the money.
  - b. Columbus took the money from England.
  - c. Columbus used money he had saved.
  - d. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain gave him money.**
  
6. Explain whether Columbus was a hero. Support your opinion with information from the text.

**Suggested answer:** Answers will vary based on what side of the debate the reader chooses. Students may explain that Columbus was a hero

because he was brave to explore new lands. Alternatively, students may explain that Columbus was not a hero because he mistreated the native people.

7. Why did Columbus sail west across the Atlantic Ocean?

**Suggested answer:** Christopher Columbus sailed west across the Atlantic Ocean because he wanted to trade with Asia for silk, gold, and spices. The trip around Africa was too long and dangerous, so Columbus wanted to find an easier and faster route to Asia. He believed that if he sailed west he would run into Asia very quickly.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Columbus believed that he had reached India, \_\_\_\_\_ he had really reached Central and South America.

- a. because
- b. but**
- c. so
- d. after

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus began the journey west by sailing on the *Nina*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria*.

When? in 1492

Who? **Christopher Columbus**

(did) What? **began the journey west**

How? **by sailing on the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** expedition: a journey made for a special purpose.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.