

Christopher Columbus

Introduction

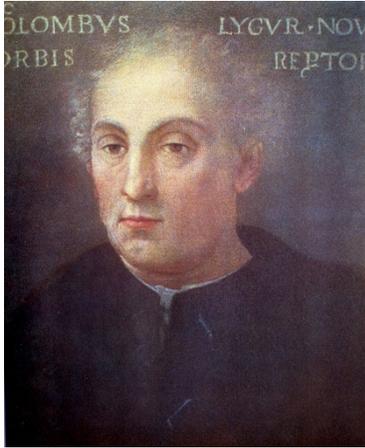


Figure 1: Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus opened the world of the Americas to his fellow Europeans. Europeans called Vikings had reached the Americas hundreds of years before Columbus first arrived there in 1492. However, the Vikings did not establish long-lasting settlements. Columbus explored the area and brought back more Europeans with him on later trips. Columbus's voyages therefore had many more lasting effects.

Columbus began an unstoppable wave of European settlement in the Americas. This settlement brought European culture to the Western Hemisphere. It also brought great hardship to the Native Americans there. They suffered from diseases brought by the Europeans. They were also enslaved and forced to mine gold for the Europeans.

Early Life



Figure 2: Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain supported Columbus's expeditions to the New World.

Cristoforo Colombo was born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451. He is known as Christopher Columbus to English-speaking people. He was the son of a weaver and had little schooling.

In about 1476 Columbus settled in Portugal. In the 1480s he started planning a voyage to discover a sea route to Asia. Europeans were eager for Asian goods. However, these goods were costly because they had to be brought to Europe over a dangerous land route. Columbus knew that Earth was round. He thought that Asia must lie to the west, across the Atlantic Ocean.

The Portuguese king refused to pay for Columbus's voyage. Columbus then turned to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of the Spanish kingdoms of Aragon and Castile. In



Figure 3: Christopher Columbus's fleet was made up of three ships: the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria.

January 1492 they agreed to support the expedition. They provided three ships: the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María*.

First Voyage

On August 3, 1492, the ships set sail. On October 12, Columbus reached the Bahamas, an island group east of Florida. He thought he had reached the East Indies in Asia. Columbus therefore called the islanders Indians.



Figure 4: Christopher Columbus and his crew landed in the Bahamas in October 1492.

Columbus reached Cuba on October 29. On December 6 he reached the island of Hispaniola. He built a fort on the island and left some men there. In January he returned to Spain. He took with him parrots, plants, gold, cloth, and several Native Americans.



Figure 5: The four voyages of Christopher Columbus

Later Voyages

Ferdinand and Isabella were pleased with Columbus and his discoveries. They soon sent him back for a second trip. On his second voyage, from 1493 to 1496, Columbus had 17 ships and about 1,300 men. He found that the men he had left behind on Hispaniola had been killed. He then started a new colony and

explored island coasts. He left his brothers in charge of the new colony when he returned to Spain.

On the third voyage, from 1498 to 1500, Columbus explored the Caribbean coast of South America. During this time, many people in the Hispaniola colony became angry with the rule of Columbus and his brothers. They complained to Spanish authorities. Columbus was eventually arrested and sent back to Spain in chains.

Upon his return, however, he was freed. He convinced Ferdinand and Isabella that he would find them treasures if he was allowed to return to the Americas. Columbus's last trip started in 1502. He explored the Central American coast but lost all four of his ships. He had to be rescued.

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Columbus returned to Spain in November 1504. He died on May 20, 1506. Until his death he remained convinced that he had reached Asia.

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