

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Not much is known for certain about the early life of Christopher Columbus. According to most accounts, he was born in 1451 in Genoa, Italy. His brother Bartholomeo was a chart maker in Lisbon, Portugal. Columbus probably studied chart making with his brother.

Columbus believed that the world could be circumnavigated (traveled around), and he wanted to travel the seas to prove it. He was very interested in exploration. Although most people of Columbus' time knew that Earth was round, not many believed that it was possible to get all the way around it by boat. Among other things, it was believed that a ship would run out of supplies before it reached land again.

At that time, spice merchants were looking for a new route to Asia. Asia was a large trading area, but it was very difficult to reach by traveling east across land. Columbus believed that it would be possible to reach Asia by traveling west across the sea. Columbus requested support from many people to help him travel the seas. Finally, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain granted his request, and gave him the money he needed for his voyage.

On August 3, 1492, Columbus and ninety men set sail on the Santa Maria along with two other ships, the Niña and the Pinta. The voyage was hard and many men were sick and tired. On October 11, at ten o'clock at night, they finally saw land. Since Columbus thought they had reached the Indies (in Asia), he and his crew expected to see people that were Indian. Even when they found out that they were not in Asia, they were happy to have found a new place that they could trade with.

Columbus named the area where they landed San Salvador, and claimed the area for Spain. Columbus continued to explore the New World and made several other voyages.

Today Columbus Day is observed in the United States on the second Monday in October. Banks and government offices are closed to honor the explorer who is believed by many to be the first European to have discovered the New World of the Americas.

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT *CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS*:

1. Columbus went on his famous voyage because ...
 - a. he wanted to be a sailor.
 - b. he believed the world could be traveled all the way around.
 - c. he liked Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain.
 - d. he wanted to discover America.

2. Which of the following is NOT true?
 - a. Columbus was Italian.
 - b. Columbus was a Spanish prince.
 - c. Columbus thought he had arrived in Asia.
 - d. none of these

3. Which ship did Columbus sail on?
 - a. the Niña
 - b. the Santa Maria
 - c. the Mayflower
 - d. none of these

4. About how long did it take Columbus to reach the new land?
 - a. three years
 - b. three months
 - c. two months
 - d. none of these

5. Which of the following IS true?
 - a. Columbus discovered a new route to Asia for the spice merchants.
 - b. Columbus was a sailor and explorer.
 - c. Columbus believed the world was flat.
 - d. both b and c

6. Who probably most influenced Columbus' interest in sailing and exploring?
 - a. the King and Queen of Spain
 - b. his father
 - c. his brother
 - d. none of these

7. Columbus Day is observed in the United States on _____.
 - a. the third week of October
 - b. October 31st
 - c. the second Monday in October
 - d. none of these