

# Contents

Introduction.....	5
1. Ferdinand II of Aragon.....	9
2. Christopher Columbus.....	15
3. Pedro .....	21
4. Christopher Columbus.....	27
5. A Taino islander.....	33
6. Christopher Columbus.....	37
7. Diego de Arana.....	43
8. Martín Alonso Pinzón .....	47
9. Christopher Columbus.....	53
10. Isabella I of Castile.....	59
Afterword.....	65
Glossary.....	69
Before reading activities.....	77
While reading activities.....	78
After reading activities.....	84



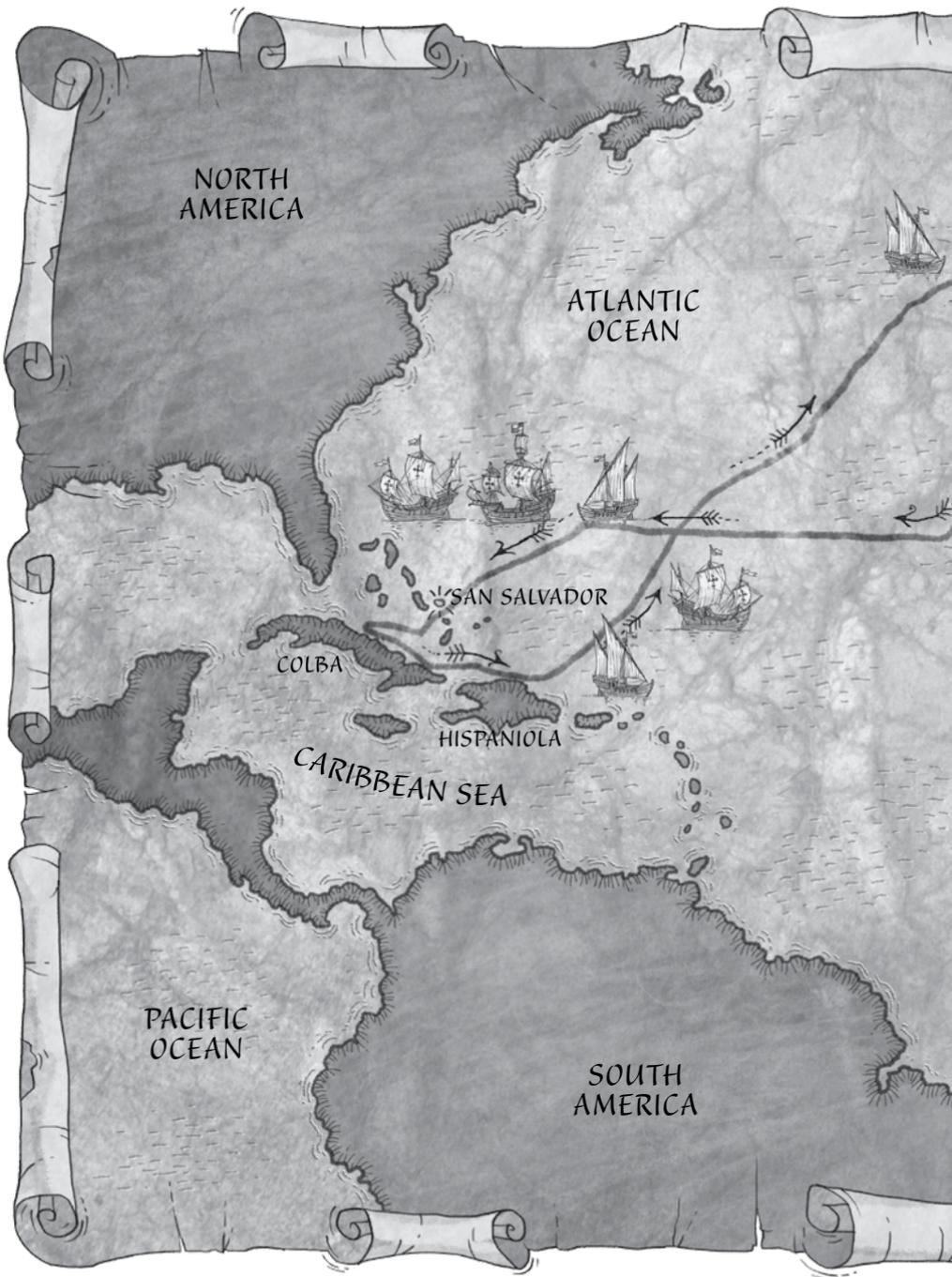
# Introduction

When Christopher Columbus finally saw land in October 1492, he thought he had **discovered** an island in 'the **Indies**'. The Indies were the far-off lands of Asia, to the east of India, which included places that we now call China and Japan. Before the time of Columbus, Europeans had travelled to India and China along the Silk Road, and they had brought back \***silk** and **spices**. At this time, the **rule** of the Mongols gave stability to much of Asia. However, after the **fall** of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the land route to Asia became dangerous and difficult. Europeans wanted to continue to **trade** with Asia, but they needed to find a sea route there.

The Portuguese began to look for an eastern sea route to the Indies by **sailing** down the coast of Africa. They made good progress with this during the 1480s. The Portuguese **sailor** Bartholomew Diaz sailed round the Cape of Good Hope at the bottom of Africa in 1488. However, Christopher Columbus had a different plan. He believed that he could reach the Indies by sailing west across the '**Ocean Sea**'. This is what we now call the Atlantic Ocean.

Columbus was probably born in 1451 in the sea port of Genoa, which is today part of Italy. At about the age of 14, he went to sea, and during the late 1460s and the 1470s, he sailed on trading ships around the Mediterranean, and also to Northern Europe.

\* Words that look like **this** appear in the glossary at the end of the book.



NORTH AMERICA

ATLANTIC OCEAN

SAN SALVADOR

COLBA

HISPANIOLA

CARIBBEAN SEA

PACIFIC OCEAN

SOUTH AMERICA

# COLUMBUS'S FIRST VOYAGE



In around 1476, Columbus moved to Portugal and established a map-making business with his brother, Bartholomew. In 1479, he married Felipa Perestrello Moniz, who was from an important Portuguese family. They had a son called Diego in 1480. During these years in Portugal, Columbus studied many important books. He read works by earlier travellers such as Marco Polo and **scholars** like Ptolemy. He then **developed** his ideas about sailing westwards to the Indies.

Like many educated people at this time, Columbus knew that the world was round. However, his calculations about the size of the Earth were wrong: he believed that the world was much smaller than it truly is. Because of this, he thought that the distance to the Indies across the Ocean Sea was much shorter too. And of course, he didn't know that the American continent was in the middle either!

In the 1480s, Columbus asked for **support** for his plans from King John II of Portugal, and Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon. However, they all said 'no' again and again. People think that Columbus's brother, Bartholomew, also went to the **court** of Henry VII of England to ask for support. During this time, Columbus's wife died, and he moved to Castile with his son.

Living in Castile, Columbus could go more easily to Ferdinand and Isabella's court, and on his visit in 1486 they listened to his ideas with some interest. However, the king and queen were busy trying to **conquer** the **Muslim** Kingdom of Granada. In the end, they finally took possession of the city of Granada on 2 January 1492. At last, after many years, Isabella and Ferdinand might be ready to think about Columbus's plans more seriously!

# 1. Ferdinand II of Aragon

*Santa Fe, Granada, 18 April 1492*

What a day we had yesterday! Isabella and I finally **\*signed a contract** with that Columbus man. Well, of course, I didn't actually sign it myself. I AM the King of Aragon, King of Sicily, Count of Barcelona, Duke of Montblanc and Count of Ribagorza. I'm also King of Castile ('by right of my wife' – don't like that bit so much!). I'm FAR too busy and important for that type of thing, so my secretary Juan de Coloma signed the contract for me.

Of course, when Columbus came to our **court** again, I wasn't at all surprised. To be honest, I thought, 'Oh no, it's that **sailor** from Genoa (or wherever he's from) again!' You see, he's been following Isabella and me around for YEARS now. And of course, he isn't difficult to recognise with his red hair, long face and blue eyes.

If I remember, he first came to talk to us in 1486 about his plans for a **voyage of discovery**. We thought his ideas were interesting, but also a bit, well – **MAD**. He spoke for ages with a big map in front of him. He isn't only a sailor, you know, he's a map-maker too!

Columbus, or 'dear Christopher' as Isabella likes to call him, thinks that he can arrive in the **Indies** by **sailing** west across the **Ocean Sea**. He says that the

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whole voyage will only take a week on one of those **caravels!** A week to get to Asia— can you believe it?!

He makes it all sound SO exciting. He has read an old book by a traveller called Marco Polo which talks about a country called **Cipangu**. Columbus thinks that he knows how to get to Cipangu on the other side of the Ocean Sea. It seems that Cipangu is FULL of gold – there are even houses with gold roofs there!

**H**

*Cipangu is an island in the eastern ocean... They have gold in the greatest abundance... but as the king does not allow anyone to export it, few **merchants** visit the country. This circumstance explains the extraordinary richness of the sovereign's palace... the entire roof is covered with gold... So great indeed are the riches of the palace that it is impossible to give a true idea of them.*

*(Marco Polo)*

Isabella and I were very interested, especially in all that gold, but we thought his plans were a bit too good to be true. So six years ago in 1486, we asked our **scholars** at the University of Salamanca to look at his ideas. They talked to him and thought about it. But in the end they all decided that his calculations were wrong – the Indies are MUCH further away than he thinks. So Isabella and I said ‘thanks’ but ‘no thanks’ to him.

Now, when Columbus came back again this time, Isabella’s adviser said, ‘Just tell the man to go away. You’ve only just taken Granada from the **Moors** and you really haven’t got time to listen to him AGAIN.’ At first, I agreed and we sent Columbus away on his slow, old mule. But then I woke up in the night! ‘Perhaps, it’s a terrible mistake!’ I thought. So early the next morning, I **sent for** my soldiers. ‘Go and find that Columbus man!’ I shouted. So my men found Columbus on the road going north and brought him back here.

Now, you might **wonder**, ‘Why did Ferdinand ask him to come back?’ Well, first of all, I’ve been looking at our money and to be honest, we haven’t got much. In fact, we’ve spent most of it on those wars against the Moors and the Reconquest of Granada. So some gold from that place Cipangu would be VERY useful. Columbus can help to **spread** the one true faith there too (that’s Catholicism in case you were wondering!).

Also, I’m sick and tired of hearing about our neighbour King John of Portugal and his wonderful ‘super-explorer’ Bartholomew Diaz.

Bartholomew Diaz  
'School Report'

1488

Bartholomew has had an excellent year. He hasn't been to many lessons as he's gone on so many voyages. But he has made great progress in geography.

His greatest **achievement** this year has been **sailing** down the coast of africa and **discovering** a place called 'the Cape of Good Hope'. He has been given the school geography prize because he has helped to open up an eastern **trade** route to the Indies by sea. Clever boy!

Well done, Bartholomew, and keep up the good work!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John II". The signature is written in black ink and features elaborate flourishes, particularly at the end of the name.

'Head teacher'

Imagine! It makes me green with jealousy just thinking about it!

I was also worried that Columbus had plans to go to the French king next. I really don't want any of my neighbours and RIVALS to discover a western route to the Indies across the Ocean Sea before us. Columbus has already visited John II of Portugal AND sent his brother to talk to Henry VII of England.



All in all, I'm pleased that Columbus came back. If his voyage is a success, everybody will say, 'Ferdinand, you're such a clever man!'. And my name will be in all the history books. And I suppose they might even mention Isabella too!

But to be honest, Isabella and I aren't sure that Columbus WILL come back! That's why we agreed to such a good contract. It says that Columbus is going to be **Admiral** of the Ocean Sea, and governor of all the countries he discovers! He's also going to have 10% of all the gold, **jewels** and **spices** that he find there! If he does come back, he'll be rich, but of course, Isabella and I will be even richer!

And do you know the best thing? At least half of the money is coming from Italian **investors**. Ha ha! The voyage will be in our name, but we don't need to find much of the money for it! Fantastic!

# Glossary

**achievement:** objective that is carried out, often showing great ability or effort

**admiral:** high-ranking officer in the navy

**anchor (vb.):** stop a boat or ship from moving using a specially designed heavy object

**arrow:** narrow piece of wood with a sharp end that is shot using a bow

**avoid:** prevent something happening

**awful:** very bad, terrible

**bead:** small, round object with a hole through it that is used to make jewellery

**bear:** tolerate; endure

**bell:** hollow metal instrument that makes a musical noise

**Bohio:** initial name used by Columbus to refer to the island that today consists of Haiti and the Dominican Republic

**bow:** instrument used to shoot an arrow

**brave:** valiant

**breathe in:** inhale

**bunch:** collection of things of the same kind held closely together

**cabin:** room inside a ship or boat

**cabin boy:** servant to the officers on a ship

**calm:** tranquil; without wind

**cane:** hollow stem of plants like bamboo or sugar cane  
**cannon:** large gun that fires heavy projectiles  
**canopy:** fabric covering that hangs over a bed, chair or other piece of furniture  
**caravel:** fast, light ship  
**chain:** series of metal links used to confine a prisoner  
**change (one's) mind:** change one's opinion  
**chilli (pepper):** small pepper with a strong taste  
**Cipangu:** name used by Marco Polo to refer to Japan  
**Colba:** name used by Columbus to refer to Cuba  
**complain:** express dissatisfaction or discontent  
**complaint:** expression of dissatisfaction or discontent  
**conceal:** hide; keep something secret  
**conquer:** take control of a country or people using force  
**contract:** legal agreement  
**court:** residence of a monarch; also refers to the people who attend the monarch  
**crew:** collective term for the people who work on a ship  
**crowd:** large number of people in the same place  
**current:** movement of water in a particular direction  
**deadly:** describes something that causes death  
**deck:** platform that extends across a ship to the other  
**deserve:** earn the right to something through one's actions  
**develop:** cause something to grow or evolve  
**discover:** find something important that was previously unknown  
**discovery:** act of finding something important that was previously unknown

**dough:** raw mixture used to make bread, cake or biscuits  
**epidemic:** large number of cases of a disease in a particular place  
**exchange:** give and receive reciprocally  
**faith:** religion  
**fall (n.):** capture by an enemy  
**fear (vb.):** be afraid; worry  
**float:** be on the surface of a liquid  
**flour:** finely ground wheat, used for making bread  
**fool:** idiot  
**forbid:** order someone not to do something  
**force:** violence  
**fort:** fortified place, often occupied by soldiers  
**found:** establish  
**gain (n.):** increase of possessions or wealth  
**gesture:** movement that expresses an idea or attitude  
**gift:** present  
**goal:** objective  
**grateful:** thankful  
**greedy:** describes an excessive desire for money or food  
**greet:** say hello; welcome  
**hanging:** suspended in the air  
**harbour:** port  
**hardtack:** type of hard biscuit that was used on ships and in the army  
**hawk:** bird of prey that feeds on small mammals  
**hire:** rent  
**Hispaniola:** name given by Columbus to the island that today consists of Haiti and the Dominican Republic

**horizon:** line at which the Earth and sky appear to meet

**huge:** enormous, very big

**hurry (vb.):** go very quickly

**hut:** basic type of building, often made of wood

**immunity:** resistance to a disease

**in charge:** responsible

**Indies:** old name for East and South-East Asia

**investor:** person who puts money into a business or other activity with the expectation of making a profit

**jewel:** precious stone

**keen:** interested in; enthusiastic

**kidney bean:** dark red bean

**kindness:** benevolence

**law suit:** legal case

**league:** old way of measuring distance, equal to approximately four to six kilometres

**local:** relating to or from a particular place

**log-book:** book in which details of a ship's voyage are written

**look-out:** person on a ship whose job is to watch the sea in case land or another ship appears

**loss:** disadvantage; something that is lost

**mad:** insane; not sensible

**mainland:** principal part of a country or continent, not an island

**maize:** American cereal crop with large grains

**man-of-war:** warship

**maravedi:** money in use in Castile and Aragon in the late 15th century

**maroon:** be on a remote island, without the means to leave

**meadow:** piece of land covered with grass

**measles:** infectious disease that causes fever, catarrh and red spots on the skin

**merchant:** trader; person who buys and sells products

**mine:** place where metals and other raw materials are extracted from the ground

**monk:** man who is a member of a religious order

**Moors:** historical term describing the North African Muslims that conquered the Iberian Peninsula

**Muslim** (*adj.*): relating to Islam

**mutiny:** rebellion of sailors or soldiers

**native:** person who is indigenous to a place or country

**necklace:** piece of jewellery worn around the neck

**notary:** person who writes and certifies legal documents

**Ocean Sea:** old name for the Atlantic Ocean

**on board:** on a boat or ship

**pale:** light coloured

**parrot:** brightly coloured bird that can imitate human speech

**pay** (*n.*): salary

**point:** indicate something using the finger

**poor:** bad

**pray:** make a request or give thanks to God

**prayer:** request or thanksgiving to God

**pretend:** behave in a false way

**provisions:** supplies of food, often for a journey or expedition

**punishment:** penalty or sanction for a crime or bad behaviour

**relative:** family member

**remind:** cause someone to remember or think of something

**repair:** fix

**restless:** nervous; unable to rest or relax

**reward:** prize (usually money) given in return for a special service or achievement

**rise:** become higher; go up

**roll out:** flatten and spread out

**rudder:** part of a ship consisting of a blade that controls the direction in which the ship moves

**rule (n.):** control over a country or people

**run out (of something):** use up one's supply

**sail (n.):** piece of strong fabric that catches the wind and helps a ship or boat to move

**sail (vb.):** travel by ship or boat

**sailor:** person who works on a ship

**save:** rescue

**scar:** mark left on the skin after a wound has healed

**scholar:** person who studies a subject and has extensive knowledge of it

**send for:** ask or order somebody to come

**servant:** person who works for another person, especially doing domestic work

**set sail:** leave by ship or boat

**shore:** land (as opposed to the sea or ocean)

**sight:** thing we can see

**sign** (*vb.*): authorise or agree to something by writing one's name

**silk**: fine cloth made from thread produced by silkworms

**sink**: become submerged in water

**slave**: person treated as another person's property

**smallpox**: viral infection that causes fever and small red spots on the skin

**snoring**: noisy breathing during sleep

**spear**: weapon consisting of a long, narrow piece of wood with a sharp end

**spice**: vegetable substance used to flavour food

**splash**: wet something with small particles of liquid

**spot**: see

**spread**: disseminate over a wider area or among a greater number of people

**stare**: look at someone in a fixed and intense way

**steal**: take someone's possessions or money without their permission

**stick**: small branch from a tree

**storm**: high winds, often combined with heavy rain

**stranger**: unknown person

**stretcher**: piece of strong fabric stretched between two poles that is used to move a sick or injured person

**strike**: hit

**stubborn**: inflexible; obstinate

**support** (*n.*): action of helping someone, for example by giving them money

**surround**: be all around a person, place or thing

**sweet potato**: sweet-tasting root similar to a potato

**tailor:** person who makes clothes  
**take on:** allow something to enter  
**take (someone) to court:** initiate a legal case  
**tax:** money that the government collects from the country's inhabitants  
**threaten:** put in danger  
**trade (n.):** buying and selling of products  
**trade (vb.):** buy and sell products  
**treaty:** agreement between two or more countries  
**trouble (adj.):** violent; tends to cause problems  
**trusting:** disposed to have confidence in other people's good intentions  
**typhus:** infectious disease that causes high fever, red spots on the skin and extreme physical weakness  
**volunteer (n.):** person who freely agrees to do something  
**volunteer (vb.):** freely agree to do something  
**voyage:** long journey, often by sea  
**warlike:** bellicose, martial  
**warn:** inform someone about a possible danger  
**waste:** bad use of something  
**weak:** not strong  
**weapon:** object or instrument that is used in combat  
**weed:** wild plant that is not considered to be useful  
**weevil:** beetle larvae that feeds on foodstuff  
**well built:** large  
**whisper:** speak very quietly  
**wonder (vb.):** ask oneself; speculate  
**worry (n.):** concern or anxiety  
**yucca:** root that is a popular food in South America

# Before reading activities

## 1. Match the words to the correct descriptions.

Asia	Place where Columbus began his first voyage
Catholic Monarchs	Type of ship used by Early-Modern explorers
Caravel	Famous Portuguese explorer
Bartholomew Diaz	Continent that Columbus was trying to reach
Genoa	Rulers who supported Columbus's voyages
Palos	Place where Columbus was probably born

## 2. Do you think these sentences are true or false? Correct the false sentences.

- Christopher Columbus was the first explorer to try to discover a sea route to Asia.
- Columbus asked several European monarchs to support his first voyage.
- Columbus called the native people that he encountered 'Indians' because he thought he was in Asia.
- Columbus discovered huge amounts of gold and spices on his first voyage.
- The new continent that Columbus discovered was named after him.

# While reading activities

**Read the introduction. Then choose the correct word to complete these sentences.**

- a) The Indies were lands in *Asia/Europe*.
- b) After 1453, it was *easier/more difficult* to travel by land from Europe to India and China.
- c) Columbus wanted to find *an eastern/a western* route to Asia.
- d) The *Turks/Portuguese* were also looking for a sea route to Asia.
- e) Columbus was probably born in 1451 in a city that is now in *Italy/Portugal*.
- f) In *1479/1476* Columbus married into an important Portuguese family.
- g) Columbus thought the Earth was *smaller/larger* than it really is.

**1. Read chapter 1. Find the mistake in each sentence and correct it.**

- a) Ferdinand is very busy, so his brother signed the contract for him.
- b) Ferdinand thinks Columbus is difficult to recognise.
- c) Ferdinand and Isabella first met Columbus in 1492.
- d) Columbus thinks that it will take a month to sail to the Indies.
- e) Ferdinand and Isabella don't have much money after their wars against the French.
- f) John II discovered the Cape of Good Hope.
- g) Ferdinand is worried that Columbus will go to the King of Portugal next.
- h) In the contract, Columbus will have half of all the gold, jewels and spices that he finds.