



## Christopher Columbus Biography

Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy in 1451. His career in exploration started when he was very young. As a teenager he traveled the seas and eventually made Portugal his base. He appealed to the kings of Portugal, France and England to finance a westward trip to the Indies, but all denied his request. After ten years of monumental efforts but fruitless results, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain agreed to finance Columbus in the hopes of acquiring great wealth. On August 3, 1492, Columbus and three ships, the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria, left Palos, Spain and headed westward.

After stopping in the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa, Columbus' ships hit the open seas. Covering about 150 miles a day, the trip was long and arduous. The crew was afraid of sea monsters and grew more restless every day land was not sighted. Columbus offered a reward for the first person to sight land. On October 12, a crew member aboard the Pinta sighted one of the Bahama Islands. Columbus set foot on what he believed was one of the Spice Islands, a group of islands in Asia (now known as Indonesia), where valuable spices and riches came from. He named the land San Salvador. Columbus failed to find the riches he expected, and continued to search for China. He next visited Cuba and Hispaniola (Dominican Republic). He encountered native peoples who he named "Indians" because he believed they were inhabitants of the Indies.

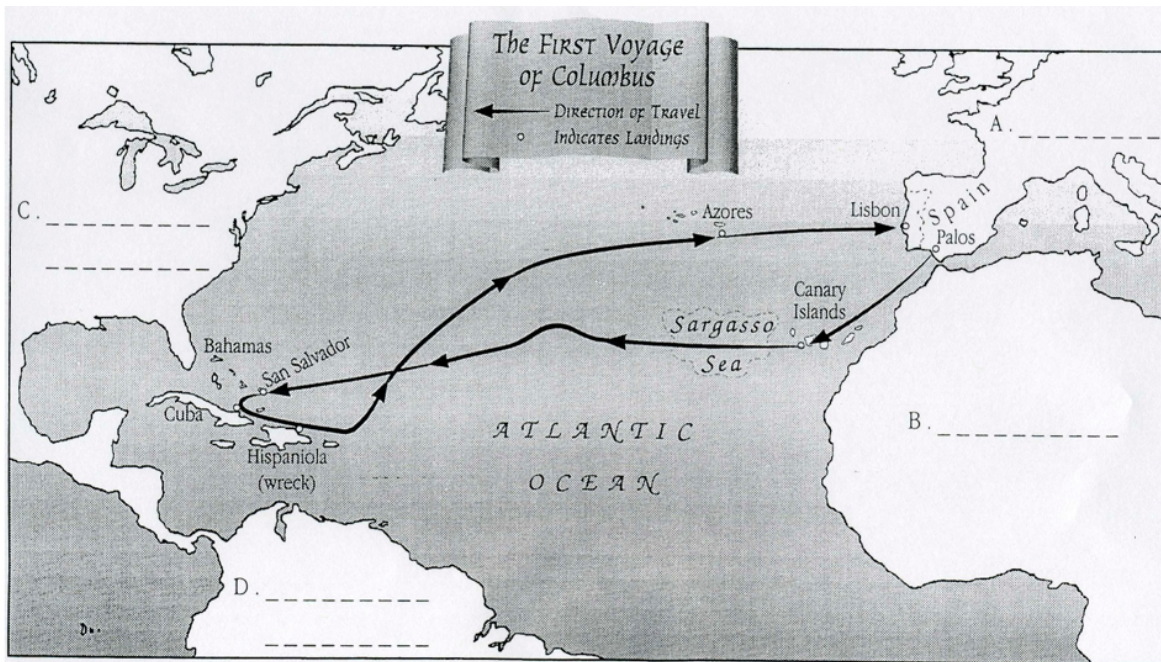


Columbus returned to Spain a hero. He was named viceroy of the Indies. He soon returned to the New World but never found the riches he expected. Some began to believe that Columbus had found "a new world" rather than a shortcut to the Indies.

Christopher Columbus made one of the greatest discoveries in the history of the world - North America. Though he probably wasn't

the first explorer to see the continent, and he believed until his death that the islands he encountered were in the Asian continent, his discoveries were instrumental in the establishment of Spanish colonies in North America. Today, we celebrate Columbus Day in October to commemorate his discoveries.

1. In what year was Christopher Columbus born? \_\_\_\_\_
2. On October 12, 1492, where did Columbus think he was? \_\_\_\_\_
3. About how many miles did the ships travel every day? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which of the following is closest in meaning to "fruitless?"  
A. Without any cost  
B. Without fruit  
C. Broken promise  
D. Without success
5. What happened first?  
A. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella agreed to pay for the trip.  
B. Columbus stopped in the Canary Islands  
C. October 12, 1492  
D. The Santa Maria left Spain and headed westward
6. What happened last?  
A. Columbus was named viceroy of the Indies  
B. October 13, 1492  
C. Spain set up colonies in the New World.  
D. Columbus encountered Indians
7. What country eventually agreed to finance Christopher Columbus' trip?  
A. Spain  
B. England  
C. Portugal  
D. France
8. Which of the following was not a ship that went on the voyage?  
A. Santa Monica  
B. Nina  
C. Santa Maria  
D. Pinta
9. Christopher Columbus thought he could find a shortcut to the Indies by sailing.....  
A. South  
B. West  
C. North  
D. East
10. Select all of the following places that Columbus visited on his voyage.  
A. ☐ Cuba  
B. ☐ Dominican Republic  
C. ☐ Canary Islands  
D. ☐ Florida



### A Letter From Christopher Columbus

1 In thirty-three days I passed from the Canary Islands to the Indies. I  
 2 found very many islands filled with people . . . and of them all I have  
 3 taken possession for Their Highnesses, by proclamation . . . and no  
 4 opposition was offered to me.  
 5 This island and all the others . . . are most beautiful . . . filled with trees of  
 6 a thousand kinds and tall, and they seem to touch the sky. And I am told  
 7 that they never lose their foliage . . . I saw them as green and as lovely as  
 8 they are in Spain in May, and some of them were flowering, some bearing  
 9 fruit.  
 10 They [the Indians] have no iron or steel or weapons, nor are they fitted to  
 11 use them . . . because they are very marvelously timorous. After they have  
 12 been reassured and have lost their fear, they are . . . so generous . . . They  
 13 never refuse anything which they possess.  
 14 As soon as I arrived in the Indies, in the first island which I found I took  
 15 by force some of them, in order that they might learn and give me  
 16 information of that which there is in those parts. And so it was they soon  
 17 understood us, and we them, either by speech or signs, and they have been  
 18 very serviceable. I still take them with me. They are always assured that  
 19 I come from Heaven . . . they were the first to announce this wherever I  
 20 went . . . with loud cries of, "Come! Come to see the people from Heaven!"  
 21 I have taken possession of a large town, to which I gave the name Villa  
 22 de Navidad. And in it I have made fortifications and a fort . . . I have  
 23 left in it sufficient men . . . with arms and artillery and provisions for  
 24 more than a year.  
 25 I will give them as much gold as they may need, if Their Highnesses will  
 26 render me very slight assistance; moreover, spice and cotton . . .

El Almirante



# Bartolomé de las Casas Criticizes Spanish Cruelty



**ABOUT THE SOURCE** In the 1500s Spanish explorers conquered a vast empire in the Americas. These conquistadors came to the New World to find wealth, spread Christianity, and win fame. In pursuing these goals, some Spanish explorers brutalized the native population. The arrival of the Spanish meant death or enslavement for millions of Native Americans. The passage below was written by a Spanish priest who observed the cruelty firsthand.



*As you read note the specific words de las Casas uses to describe the actions of the Spanish. The following words may be new to you: **iniquity, perpetrators, solemnity.** You may want to use a dictionary to look them up.*

New Spain was discovered in 1517. The explorers treated the inhabitants offensively and murdered some Indians. Under the guise of developing the country, the Christians (as they call themselves) in 1518 engaged in plunder and slaughter. From 1518 until the present day, and it is now 1542, the **iniquity**, injustice, violence, and tyranny that the Spanish have committed against the Indians has escalated as the **perpetrators** lost all fear of God and the King and all self-respect as well . . .

During the 12 years, the Spanish killed more than four million men, women, and children with swords and lances, and by burning people alive . . . This does not count those who have died, and continue to die every day, from the slavery and the oppression that the Spanish impose . . .

Among other massacres perpetrated by the Spanish was one that took place in Cholula, a city with thirty thousand inhabitants. Dignitaries and priests from the city and the surrounding countryside greeted the Spanish with great **solemnity** and respect, and escorted them into the city and lodged them in the homes of the local nobility. The Spanish decided to stage a massacre—or a “chastisement” as they call it—in order to terrorize the population.

To accomplish this, the Spanish summoned the local dignitaries. As soon as they arrived to hold talks with the Spanish commander, they were taken captive and had no opportunity to warn others. Then the Spanish demanded five or six thousand Indians to carry their loads . . . Once these poor wretches assembled in the courtyard, guards blocked the gates while Spanish soldiers slaughtered the Indians with swords and lances.

Bartolomé de las Casas

## EXPLORATIONS OF THE USA'S SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST

