

# Christopher Columbus

It was nearly four hundred years after the Northmen left North America, before Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was born.

Christopher Columbus

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He was born in a little town by the sea, Genoa. This town was in southern Europe, in the country of Italy, where the sun shines brightly all the year, and where the sea is nearly always calm and blue. Every day ships came and went in the little harbor, and the boys and girls watched them from the wharf.

1. Columbus was born in \_\_\_\_.
  - a. Greece
  - b. Italy
  - c. Spain
  - d. Turkey

As soon as Columbus could walk, his brother used to take him down to see the ships come and go. All day long the brothers would play about among the boats that were drawn up on the beach. Sometimes they were allowed to play on the decks of the ships, so that when Columbus was only seven years, old he knew the name of every mast and every sail and every rope.



A SHIP OF THE TIME OF COLUMBUS

There were rowboats fastened to the wharf, and Columbus liked to sit

and rock in them. Sometimes his brothers would row him out to the big ships in the harbor, and the boys would play that they were sailors going out on a voyage across the great ocean. Then they would talk of the wonderful cities they were going to see, and the wonderful treasures they were going to bring home.

voyage

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When Columbus was old enough, he would steer the boat, and his big brother would play captain. "Keep due west!" the brother would shout.

And Columbus would shout back, "Ay, ay, sir."

Often, Columbus would sit for hours watching the sailors unload their ships. Sometimes they would let him help them, and then Columbus would go down into the hold, and into the cabin where the sailors lived while they were on board ship. He soon learned the names of all the parts of even the biggest ships, and could climb the rigging like a real sailor.

## 2. Christopher Columbus liked helping the sailors.

a. True

b. False

"You will make a fine sailor by and by," the men would say to him.

But best of all, Columbus liked to listen to the stories that the sailors told of far-off countries, and to look at the wonderful things that they brought from the lands across the sea.

"I shall be a sailor when I am a man!" Columbus would say to himself. "Then I shall see these far-off lands."

sailor

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Now, the father of Columbus was a wool-comber. He would have been very glad to have Columbus learn the wool-comber's trade. But he soon saw that his son cared for nothing but the sea. So he said to him one day: "I will send you to a school where you can learn all about the sea. I will send you to a school where you can learn to be a good sailor!"

3. Columbus's father was a \_\_\_\_.

- a. explorer
- b. prince
- c. sailor
- d. wool-comber

This was just what Columbus longed for. He could hardly wait for the day when he should be allowed to go. How he studied at this school! How fast he learned! His teachers were proud of him; and his father and mother were proud of him, too.

When the boy had learned all there was for him to learn at this school, he came home and made ready to go to sea.

He was only fourteen years old when he made his first voyage; and he "followed the sea" till he was an old man.

Most people in those days thought that the earth was flat. "If it is flat," they said. "We must take care not to sail too near the edge. We might sail off, down into nowhere!"

But Columbus, on one of his voyages, had been to Iceland. There he had heard of the Vineland far away in the west. Besides, Columbus had read books which said that the earth is

round like a ball, and he felt sure that the books were right. Very few people knew about books in those days, so when Columbus began to talk about a round earth, the people laughed at him.

"Anybody can see for himself that the earth is flat," the people said.

"It does not even look flat," Columbus would say. "Indeed, when a ship goes out to sea, it seems to sail down over a rounded surface. And when the ship comes back it is the tops of the masts we see first."

rounded surface

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The people listened, but they did not believe him.

"He is crazy," they said.

"If I had a ship and some good sailors," Columbus thought. "I know I could sail out into the west and around the world."

For many years, no one would believe him, and he could find no sailors brave enough to sail out into the strange seas with him.

**4. Why did people laugh at Christopher Columbus?**

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"The earth is flat, and we should sail off the edge!" the people would say. "Then, too, there are dragons and sea serpents out in the strange seas. They would eat us alive."

After a long time, Columbus found a good old monk who listened to him. This monk was a wise man, and he believed what Columbus said. The monk went to Isabella, queen of Spain, and said: "Here is a man who can bring great riches to Spain. Let me bring him to you, and let him tell his story."

So Queen Isabella called Columbus to the palace, and he spread out his maps and told his story. The friends of the queen could see no sense in what he told them; they laughed at him and called him a madman. The king and queen, however, believed that

Columbus was right, and they promised to give him ships.

"It can do no great harm," they said. "Even if he is mistaken. And if he is right, then we shall find a short way to the Spice Islands! Think how much time and money it will save!"

Columbus hardly dared believe King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella when they promised to help him. Were they really going to give him ships?

**5. Who were the king and queen of Spain at this time?**

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In 1492, Columbus sailed out from the little port of Palos in Spain, while the people crowded down to the wharves to see the ships depart.

Palos, Spain

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 12 16 5 18 23 9 18 17    17 19 3 5 4 1    13 8 4    16 12 4 19 25  
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 13 8 4    1 4 4 14    9 5 18 4    17 4 19

**Crack the puzzle code to decipher a famous rhyme about Christopher Columbus. Each number represents a letter of the alphabet.**

**6. When did Columbus set out on his journey to sail around the world?**

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"These men will never come back," some of the people said. "The dragons will eat them."

But there were a few wise ones in the crowd, and they said to the sailors: "Be brave. Obey Columbus. He knows what to do. Think of the glory of finding a short way to the Spice Islands!"

Then the sailors cheered:

"Long live Spain! Long live the King! Long live the Oueen! Long live Columbus!"

While the people were still cheering, the vessels – the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa María* – sailed out of the harbor. Out into the west, straight across the Atlantic Ocean, they sailed for days and days.

**7. Name Columbus's three ships.**

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No vessel had ever sailed so far from the coast before, and it was no wonder that the sailors began to be afraid. Would they sail over the edge of the earth? The longer the sailors thought about it, the more frightened they grew.

"Why did we ever come?" said one sailor.

"Columbus is a madman," said another.

"Why do we obey him?" said a third.

"Let us chain him up and take him back to Spain!"

"Let us throw him overboard!"

Columbus knew that the sailors were angry. He soon learned that they were planning to take the ships back to Spain – a mutiny. But he knew also that the vessels were nearing land. "It would be a great pity to turn back now," he thought.

mutiny

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So he called his men to him.

"We are very near land," he said. "Do you see the fresh branches of trees that float by? They cannot have floated far. If they had, they would not look so fresh and green. And have you seen the small birds in the air? Surely, small birds do not fly far from land!"

Still the sailors frowned and sulked.

"We don't care where we are," they muttered. "We want to get back to Spain."

So at last Columbus said, "Give me three days more. If we do not see land then, I will turn our vessels toward home."

To this the sailors agreed, and the vessels sailed on.

But how anxious Columbus was! Would he have to give up, and go back to Spain?

One morning, just at daybreak, there came a call from the first ship. "Land! Land! Land!" the sailors shouted with all their might.

Columbus's heart beat fast. Could it be true? Yes, there was land. Every sailor could see it.

In a few hours the vessels came close to an island. The sailors jumped

into the small boats, and quickly rowed to the shore.

Meantime, the native Taíno on the land had seen the ships, and they, too, hurried down to the shore.

## Taíno

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"Why have these strange canoes come to our island?" they wondered, for the Taíno had never seen anything like them.

### 8. What people were living on the Caribbean island when Columbus landed?

- a. Aztec
- b. Inca
- c. Maya
- d. Taíno

"Are they canoes? Or are they birds with white wings? If they are canoes, how do they move along the waters without oars?" the Taíno said to each other.

But when the Spaniards landed, the Taíno wondered still more. They

had half a mind to run back into the woods. But the bright-colored clothing of the Spaniards was so wonderful! The Taíno had never seen anything so beautiful.

Now, Columbus had brought with him a great cross and a Spanish flag; mid when the men were landed, Columbus set up the cross and raised the flag.

## Spaniards

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Then the sailors knelt before the cross. A good monk gave thanks to God for having brought them over the seas in safety, and the Taíno looked on in wonder. The island was very beautiful. There was fruit in plenty, and the sailors were glad to explore.

"We must be on the shores of Asia," Columbus said; for he did not know that he had come to the Americas. Because he thought he was in India, Columbus called the native people *Indians*.

"And if this is the shore of Asia, we have found a short way to the Spice

Islands. Indeed, this may be one of them."

Columbus was now anxious to get back to Spain. He longed to tell the king and queen of his success, and that the short route had been found. He longed, too, to tell them that the earth is round like a ball, and that ships can indeed sail around it.

So the sailors gathered some of every kind of fruit and flower. They also seized a few of the natives, and then sailed back to Spain.

**9. Imagine that you are a Taíno, seized by Christopher Columbus, then taken to Spain. How might you react? Explain your answer.**

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You should have heard the people shout when Columbus sailed into the harbor of Palos. It was the greatest voyage that had ever been made. For the first time ships had sailed straight across the broad ocean. And they had not sailed over the edge of the earth, and no – dragons had not eaten the sailors alive.

"Long live Columbus! Long live Columbus ! Long live Columbus!" the people shouted.

Then Columbus went before King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, and told them all about the voyage. He showed them the strange fruits and flowers, and the natives in their feathers and war paint.

The king and queen were proud of Columbus. They gave him rich presents. Honors were poured upon him. People no longer laughed at Columbus; they no longer called him a madman. They were anxious to do all they could to honor him; for now, Columbus was a great man in Spain.

Atlantic Ocean

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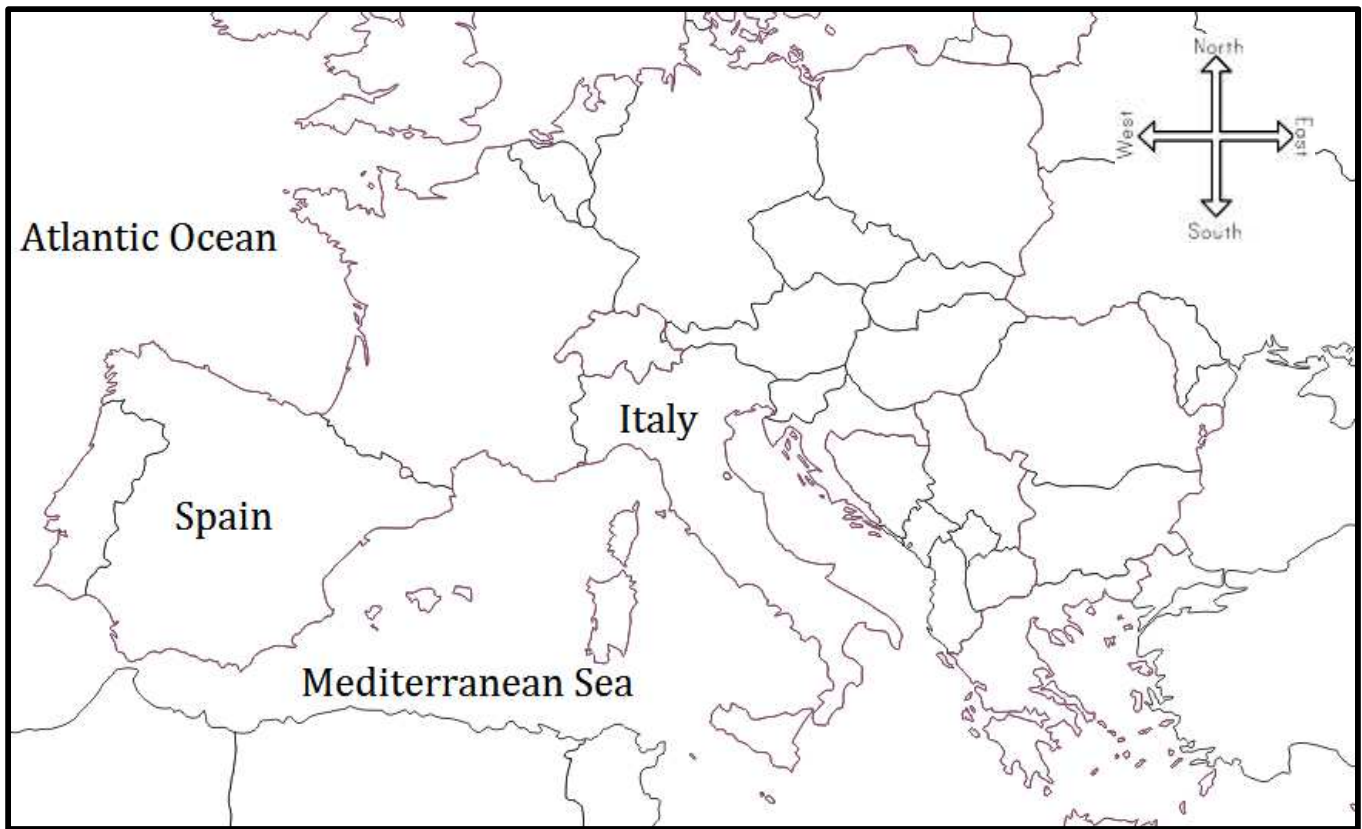


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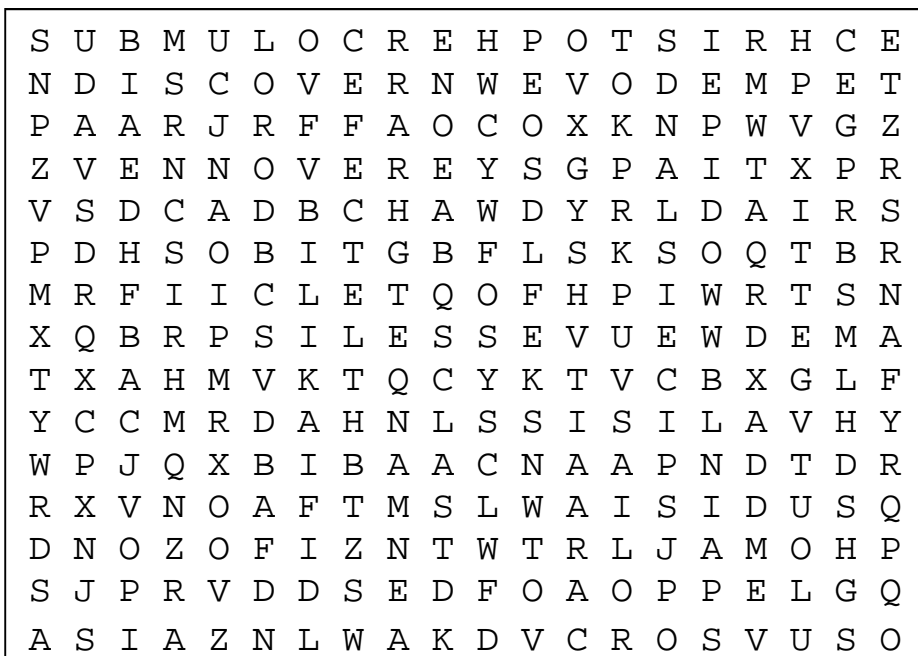
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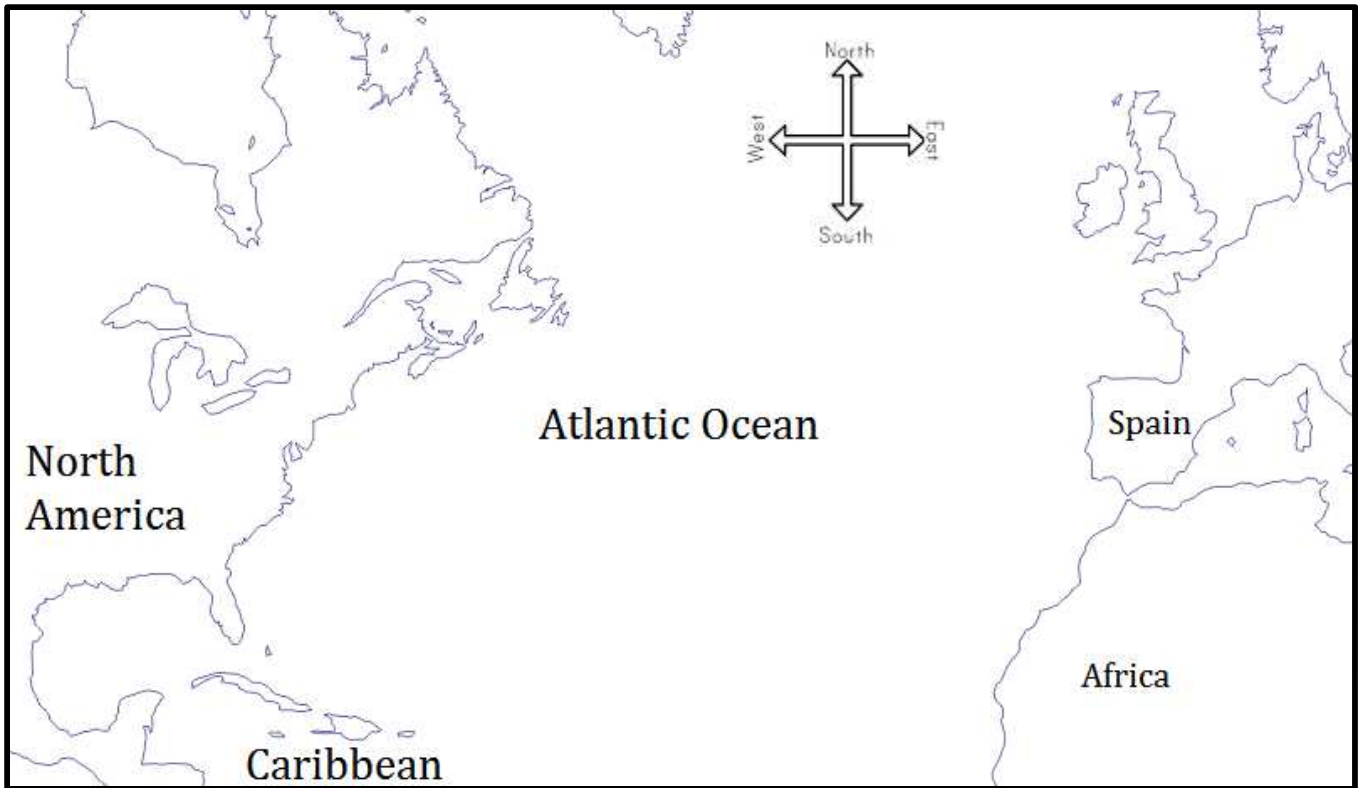


On the map of modern Europe above, color the (1) Atlantic Ocean and the (2) Mediterranean Sea blue. Color (3) Spain blue. Color (4) Italy red.

Find each term in the word search puzzle below.



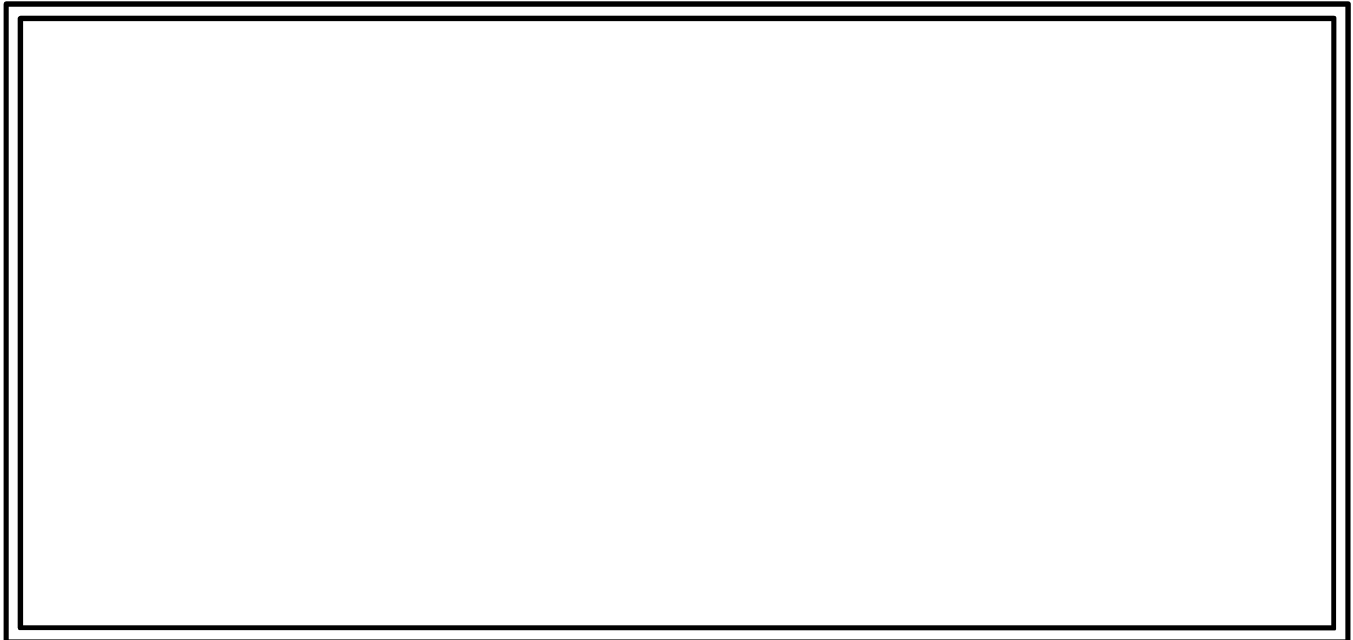
- Asia
- Atlantic Ocean
- Caribbean
- Christopher Columbus
- discover
- explore
- Italy
- sailor
- ship
- Spain
- Spice Islands
- Taíno
- vessel
- voyage



On the map above, draw an arrow indicating Columbus's trip from Spain, across the Atlantic Ocean, to the Caribbean.

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Illustrate a scene from the life of Christopher Columbus.



Click here for the workbook answer key: <http://bit.ly/Rly08z>