

## Part I: Period of Discovery

# The Boy Columbus

About this time (1400s) there lived in Italy a boy by the name of Christopher Columbus. He lived at Genoa, a small seaport town on the Mediterranean Sea. When not at school Columbus was generally found standing about the wharves, watching the great ships come and go and listening to the marvelous stories told by the sailors.

Genoa at this time was a very rich town and sent ships to all parts of the known world. The little boy drank in all the wonderful stories the sailors were so fond of telling, and thus learned much of the far away countries.

"I shall be a sailor," he would say to himself as he listened; and then, like all other small lads, he longed to grow big and strong.

His parents were poor but wise and tried to give him a good education. He was taught to read and write, and when old enough his father sent him away to school, where he could study arithmetic, drawing and geography.

He learned Latin, wrote a good hand, and could draw maps and charts for the use of sailors, by

which last calling he was able to support himself when he came to be a man.

He was only fourteen years old when he made his first voyage upon the great blue sea with some traders bound for the East Indies. From that time on, his life was like that of all sailors, I suppose, full of adventures, narrow escapes and marvelous experiences.

When thirty-five years old, he went to Lisbon, the capital city of Portugal. He was a quiet, dignified, thoughtful man. His hair had grown white, and he had here and there on his face lines of care and trouble. The stories of sea-gods and wind-gods had long ceased to satisfy him. He said there must be something different from this. And so, year after year, he pondered upon the shape of the earth. He read every account of travels, every story of adventure, every theory of the earth's size and shape that he could find. "It is easy enough to guess about these things," he would say, "but there must be some natural law, some real fact, that, if discovered, would give us the true knowledge."

## Questions

1. Where did Christopher Columbus live as a young boy?
2. According to this brief sketch, what language did Columbus study at school?
3. How old was Columbus when he made his first voyage "upon the great blue sea"?
4. Lisbon is the capital city of what European country?
5. Imagine that you are Columbus, growing up in a coastal trading town. Might you be drawn to sailing? Why or why not?