

Part I: Period of Discovery

King John II of Portugal and Columbus

John II, then king of Portugal, was convinced that these notions of Columbus, as the people were pleased to call them, were not so absurd as they seemed. “The man knows what he is talking about, I believe,” said he. “I will get his plans, pretend to favor them, pretend to be willing to aid him—then we’ll see who will have the honor of the first expedition, Columbus, the Genoese wool-comber’s son, or John II, King of Portugal!”

And so this mean King led Columbus on to tell his reasons for believing the earth to be round. When he had learned all, and had stolen the maps and charts which Columbus had made, he secretly

sent out a vessel and ordered the captain to follow closely the route that Columbus had marked out.

This was a mean trick, and no wonder it did not succeed. A great storm arose. The waves rolled high and tumbled and broke above them mountains high. The thunder rumbled and the lightning flashed. Terror-stricken, the sailors turned homeward. A more miserable crew never sailed back to Lisbon than this crew sent out by King John II.

Columbus, disappointed with the King, took his little son, Diego, with him, left the country, and went to Spain.

Questions:

1. Who reigned as king of Portugal at this time?
2. What did John II do with the maps and charts of Columbus?
3. What happened to the vessel that was sent out by John II?
4. Where did Columbus take his son when he left Portugal?
5. Imagine that you are Christopher Columbus, trying to find a financial backer for your voyage. How might you react to John II’s actions? Explain.