

“Christopher Columbus: Man & Myth”

1. In what year did Chris first sail across the “ocean blue” to a New World?

2. Where was Columbus probably born? _____
3. What was the nationality of Columbus’ wife? _____
4. What was the nationality of Columbus’ mistress? _____
5. In the 15th century did most people think the world was round or flat? _____
6. Who came to American before Columbus? _____

6. Why, then, the myth that only Columbus thought the world was round? _____

7. Where did Chris want to go on his trip? _____
8. Who came to American before Columbus? _____

9. Name his three famous ships: _____
10. Where did he make his first landfall in the Americas? _____
11. On what date (today) did Columbus land in America? _____
12. How many trips did he make to the New World? _____
13. Why wasn’t America named after Columbus? _____

14. Where is Columbus buried? ? _____

15. What is the legacy of Columbus’ discovery? _____

**For answers, visit MCHE website. at <http://teachinghistoryinmi.org>
Check out eh bibliography of Columbus books following the answ**

Answers to “Christopher Columbus: Man & Myth”

1. In what year did he first sail across the ‘ocean blue?’ to a New World? 1492

2. Where was Columbus probably born?

Probably in Genoa, Italy, in 1451 (Idea confirmed in an article in the Jan. 1992 issue of National Geographic.) Father was a wool weaver and minor gov’t official and mother was a daughter of a wool weaver. Chris was also claimed by Spanish, Portuguese, even the English

3. What was the nationality of Columbus’ wife?

About 1479, he married Dona Felipa Perestrello e Moniz, Portuguese, from a wealthy family. In 1480, son Diego was born Wife died about 1485 and shortly afterward Chris went with his son Diego for his first meeting with Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain. =

4. What was the nationality of Columbus’ mistress?

Columbus also had a son, Ferdinand, by his Spanish mistress, Beatriz Enriquez de Harana, in 1488--Ferdinand became Chris’ 1st biographer

5. In the 15th century did most people think the world was round or flat?

Not only did most people think the world was round but Toscanelli, a physician in Florence, estimated the distance from the Canary Island to Japan as 3,400 miles

Columbus used his skills as a mathematician to revise the estimate down to 2,760 miles, basically by underestimating the number of miles in a degree (with 360* for a circumference, Chris thought each degree would be about 45 miles at the distance north of the equator that he planned to travel--at the equator, he estimated a degree to be 52 miles) His estimates were 25% smaller than actual distances. Globe is about 24,900 miles circumference rather than the less than 19,000 miles of Chris) The distance from the Canaries to Japan is 11,776 miles rather than the 2,760 miles estimated by Columbus. (Est. of 2,760 would be about right for Canaries to the Bahamas)

Columbus also overestimated the size of the Eurasian land mass. Using ideas of Aristotle and the Book of Edras in the Hebrew Bible (parts of which are the Book of Ezra in the English Bible), Columbus concluded that the world was 6 parts land to 1 part water and therefore sailing west would be feasible to reach Asia safely.

6. Why, then, the myth that only Columbus thought the world was round?

In part because America needed a non-English hero in the years after the American Revolution and the War of 1812, and writer Washington Irving, in an 1828 Columbus biography, made him look brilliant among a world of dunces. Not accurate, but still very popular.

7. Where did Chris want to go on his trip? China/Japan/the Indies;

8. Who came to America before Columbus?

Obviously, the Indians (possibly as early as 40,000 years ago and certainly by 15,000 years ago across the Bering Strait)

About 458 A.D., a group of 5 Buddhist monks from China traveled north along the eastern coast of Asia and followed an island chain before traveling south along a large land mass

About 500 A.D., an Irish monk named Brendan sailed west from Ireland and claimed to have found land. He became the patron saint of Irish sailors.

About 1000 A.D., via Greenland, most notably the voyage of Leif Ericsson laid the basis for a Viking claim to the discovery; possibly even a settlement on Newfoundland (remains have been found)

Other stories include Phoenicians about the 4th century B.C., possible the Lost Tribes of Israel, Romans, Polynesians, some Portuguese sailors in the 1480's and Africans as early as 1000 A.D.

9. Name his 3 ships:

The Nina (really the Santa Clara, but nicknamed for owner, Juan Nino) the Pinta, and the Santa Maria (really La Gallega, the flag ship, but shipwrecked on the Dominican Republic on Christmas Eve, 1492=, crew of about 90 (40 on the Santa Maria and 25 on each of the other 2) Alice Gould spent 40 years studying the crew. She documented 87 names and believes there might have been as many as 118.

10. Where did Columbus make his first landfall in the Americas?

On San Salvador, but the real question is which island is really San Salvador. In 1926, the British govt changed the name of Watlings Island to San Salvador and this opinion has the support of Samuel Eliot Morison, who sailed across the Atlantic using Columbus' log (as available--the original was lost) Also, Columbus never returned to his 1st landing site.

But in 1986, Joseph Judge used a computer to plot Columbus' course and concluded that Samana Cay was the site of the 1st landfall. This view is supported by the National Geographic Society.

In 1989, a scholarly conference concluded that Grand Turk, in the Turks and Caicos, a chain south of the Bahamas, was the 1st landing. However, expenses for this conference were paid by the govt of the Turks & Caicos.

11. On what date did Columbus land in America?

Oct 12, 1492, using the Julian calendar--but we use the Gregorian calendar as adopted by a papal bull in 1582. So, by our calendar, Columbus Day is really Oct. 21st, 9 days later than all the "Highland Appliance" sales. Is Highland still in business??

The journey took 33 days after leaving the Canary Island

12. How many trips did he make to the Americas? Four--

First Voyage: 1492-1493

Aug. 3rd--left Palos Spain

Aug. 12-Sept. 6 San Sebastian in Canary Islands

Sept. 9-Oct. 12 33 days from Canary Islands to San Salvador then sailed along northern coast of Cuba & to Hispaniola where, on Xmas Eve(or early Xmas morning), the Santa Maria ran aground; Columbus built a small fort from the wood, La Navidad, and left 40 men there before returning to Spain; northerly route; Nina became his ship, separated from Pinta; landed in the Azores, a Portuguese region, and then in Lisbon, Portugal, before reaching Spain on March 15, 1493, a few hours before the Pinta

Second Voyage: Sept. 1493-1496

17 ships with 1,200 to 1,400 men; found Navidad destroyed and no survivors established a new settlement to the east and named it Isabella This settlement was also not successful and in 1496, a new, permanent colony, Santo Domingo, was founded by Chris' brother Bartholomew who had been left in charge when Chris returned to Spain In March 1496.

Third Voyage: 1498-1500

First time Columbus saw the American continent (South Amer.--(he never saw coast of United States). Complaints by some of the colonists caused the Spanish monarchs to send an investigator to check on Columbus' treatment of the Spanish nobles and his governing policies. In Sept. 1500, Chris was returned to Spain in chains by Francisco de Bobadilla, who then became the leader of the Santo Domingo colony. Columbus regained his freedom in Spain, but did not regain the power he once held.

Fourth Voyage: 1502-1504

4 ships, 146 men--He agreed not to return to Hispaniola, but storm-he was refused entry to port; death of Bobadilla in storm (He ignored Chris' warning.) explored along coast of Central America. Due to worm-riddled leaks, he grounded his ships in Jamaica and was marooned for a year before being rescued. When he returned to Spain, the Queen was dying and the King was no longer interested in seeing Columbus. Contrary to stories, Columbus did not live out his final days in poverty. He did get a share of the profits from the Indies and this did give him a very substantial income. A museum near Penn State University in PA contains many Columbus family artifacts.

13. Why wasn't America named after Columbus?

Mainly because Amerigo Vespucci, another Italian, had a better press agent. Actually, he had made 2 trips (for Spain, 1499-1500) and Portugal (1501-1502) but was not in charge--might even have made 4 trips--did write extensively about what he had seen and thought it might be a New World

In 1507, Martin Waldensmuller, a German mapmaker, developed a map of the Now World, and placed the name "Amerigo" on the region of Brazil...as the shape of North America

became known, the label was simply attached to the entire land mass (In 1538, the great cartographer Gerardus Mercator published a map of the world that extended the name to both continents.” Wilford, p207

14. Where is Columbus buried?

He died on May 20, 1506, in Valladolid, Spain, and was buried there. But in 1509, his body was moved to Seville and, in 1541, in accordance with a wish expressed in the will of his son Diego, the body was moved to Santo Domingo.

In 1796, after the French had gained control of Hispaniola, a coffin thought to contain the remains of Columbus was taken to Havana, Cuba. Then, after the Spanish-American War, the remains were returned to Seville, Spain, in 1899, and some ashes were sent to Genoa, his birthplace.

However, the govt of the Dominican Republic claims the wrong coffin was removed from Santo Domingo in 1796 and that Chris is still there. In fact, for several years, sailors in Santo Domingo have ceremonially guarded a crypt where Columbus is said to be interred. Plans call for a relocation in 1992 to a new \$3.5 billion “Columbus Lighthouse” being built as part of the quincentennial celebration

An effort by Dr. Jonathan Ericson to scientifically determine where Columbus really is was rejected by the Govt of Santo Domingo. Wilford concludes that “A fitting conclusion to this last Columbus mystery would be to discover that in death the explorer found himself both in ‘Europe and the New World.’” (p. 244)

15. What is the legacy of Columbus’ discovery?

In 1893, at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, President Benjamin Harrison called Chris ‘the Pioneer of Progress and Enlightenment’ while in 1992, Russell Means, a Native American activist, said Columbus was worse than Hitler. For a thoughtful description of the legacy of Columbus read “Seeds of Change”

A Brief Columbus Bibliography

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