

Christopher columbus



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Who was the greatest explorer of the Age of Exploration? Vespucci? No. Magellan? No. Columbus? Yes. Columbus paved the road for all explorers of the time. Columbus was an Italian explorer who thought that he could reach India by traveling west instead of having to sail under the southern tip of Africa; this was very dangerous because of the harsh weather and pirates looking for ships to raid. At the time in Europe it was a common belief of the educated that the world was round, but this theory was never successfully tested by the Europeans by sailing around the world.

The people of Europe had not known of the travels of the Vikings to Canada 500 years earlier so they had no idea of other land that had not yet been discovered. Columbus requested multiple countries to sponsor his journey to the west; most countries rejected him but he finally came to agreements with Spain in early 1492. Columbus was given three ships commonly known as the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria but Nina and Pinta were just nicknames the crew had given to them. Mariners dubbed one of the three ships on Columbus's 1492 voyage the Pinta, Spanish for "the painted one" or "prostitute." The Santa Clara, meanwhile, was nicknamed the Nina in honor of its owner, Juan Nino. Although the Santa Maria is called by its official name, its nickname was La Gallega, after the province of Galicia in which it was built." (History.com). Columbus departed on these ships August 3, 1492 and arrived at the Americas October 12, 1492. Columbus made four total journeys to the new world but each time he believed that where he had been was the East Indies.

Columbus is often criticized for not really being the first European to the New World and for his harsh treatment of the native people, but Columbus'

contributions to the world were more positive than often believed. Without Columbus to spark the Age of Exploration of a New World, history would have been much different. Christopher Columbus deserves his status as a prominent historical figure worthy of his own holiday because he helped spark the Age of Exploration, started the colonization of the Americas, and was one of the bravest explorers ever.

Columbus did not start the Age of Exploration as it had been going for a couple hundred years before his travels, but he brought it to its climax. The Age of Exploration was started primarily to find the fastest route to the East Indies where spices and other valuables were traded. The first routes were the Silk Road and around the southern tip of Africa. The Silk Road was a route that went from China to Rome and was done mostly on camel and horseback. This was very dangerous as there were locals who raided people traveling on it.

Sailing around Africa was also very dangerous because it took longer and there were pirates. Columbus thought that if the world was round then he could reach the East Indies by traveling west, which while being true proved a more difficult task than thought originally. Little did Columbus know but there was a giant land mass in the way. By the time Columbus died many other voyages had been made by many other explorers from the interest he had sparked of a new route to the East Indies, one of which was an explorer by the name of Amerigo Vespucci.

Vespucci, like Columbus, had been born in Italy and had been employed by Spain. Unlike Columbus he had also been employed by Portugal. When Amerigo made his third visit to the land at which Columbus arrived, he sailed

south along South America “ Believing he had discovered a new continent, in a letter to Florence, Vespucci called South America the New World” (Biography. com). The new land was later named the Americas after him by a German cartographer. Europe, hearing of this new land sent many explorers to the Americas to make land claims.

This time period is known as the Age of Exploration. The exploration did not end after most of the land had been claimed because explorers were searching for a fast route to the Pacific Ocean. There was confirmation that the East Indies could be reached by going further west after an Explorer by the name of Ferdinand Magellan had sailed under the southern tip of South America all the way through the East Indies under Africa and back to Europe. Unfortunately he died before the journey back to Europe had ended, along with most of his crew.

Columbus was the reason for the exploration of the Americas over the next couple hundred years. Christopher Columbus not only explored the Americas but also made the first known European colonization there. In the deal Columbus made with Spain, he would receive ten percent of the riches he brought back, a noble title, and full governorship of any lands he may encounter. In Columbus’ four trips to the Americas, Columbus set up multiple colonies. The first was part accident; on Columbus’ first journey Christmas day 1492, the Santa Maria hit a coral reef and had to be abandoned. Columbus returned to Spain aboard the Nina, but he had to leave nearly 40 crewmembers behind to start the first European settlement in the Americas —La Navidad” (History. com) on the island of Hispaniola. Later on his second voyage with the goal to set up colonies for Spain, Columbus returned to

Hispaniola to find all of the crew members dead and the settlement destroyed. Columbus punished the natives by forcing them to mine for gold and pick cotton; killing many of them which is where some of Columbus' criticism originates. Other colonies Columbus made were in the Dominican Republic, and surrounding islands.

Many other countries also started setting up colonies at the time including England, France, and Portugal. The most successful colonies were first set up by the English; starting in Modern day Virginia and Massachusetts then spreading out becoming the thirteen original colonies of the United States of America. This is part of the reason why we celebrate Columbus Day. Also some speculate that Columbus died believing he found the East Indies. Deep down inside he may have known that he had discovered a new world but refused to admit that he was wrong to protect his original theory that he could sail west to reach India.

Some of Columbus' crew members had said to him that they believed he had discovered new land but Columbus ignored his crew's suspicion. Regardless of what Columbus actually believed he still started to colonize the land that he discovered. Through his bravery, various achievements, and legacy Columbus may have been one of the greatest explorers ever. During Columbus' time it was a common belief among all people but the poor and very uneducated that the world was round and that traveling west could make one reach the East Indies, but it was not believed that they were very close.

According to Columbus' calculations it could be done though. When Columbus brought these calculations to countries to look at so they could

sponsor his journey they told him that he was inaccurate and his journey would take much longer than he thought. Columbus was rejected by three different countries over ten years, England, Portugal, and France, until finally being granted his wish by Spain. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain and Columbus knew there was a chance that Columbus may not return because of the danger and questionable calculations, but Columbus was embarking on his journey in the hope that it would turn out well. Unfortunately “ Columbus dramatically underestimated the earth’s circumference and the size of the oceans. Luckily for him, he ran into the uncharted Americas. ” (History. com). Through his bravery, Columbus may not have known or believed it but he had also discovered a new land between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Columbus’ legacy has lived on for over 500 years after making his first journey across the Atlantic. Today Columbus is the patron of a charitable organization called the Knights of Columbus.

This organization’s principles are charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. Columbus had been selected as this organization’s patron in 1882 for being Catholic and his for his accomplishment of discovering the Americas for the Europeans. Columbus’ legacy is mixed but is overall more positive than negative. Although he was blamed for the deaths of many natives and also enslaved many of them, he sparked the growth of many great nations that we know today and altered history for the better.

Christopher Columbus sparking the Age of Exploration, starting the colonization of the Americas, and being one of the greatest explorers ever are reasons why Columbus deserves his status as a significant historical

figure worthy of having his own holiday. Columbus beginning the Age of Exploration dramatically changed history and what was occurring at the time, leading to many years of discovery. Without Columbus' journey it may have been a few hundred more years before the discovery of the Americas.

The Americas may not have been called the Americas, and the country we live in today may still be a colony of a different European country other than England. Colonies in the Americas were started by Columbus and at first were very unsuccessful, but later these colonies grew and had revolutions against their original countries. Later these colonies formed into the independent countries we know today. Also through his bravery and achievements Columbus left a legacy behind of one of the greatest explorers ever. Next time Columbus' legacy is questioned think of how the world could be different without him.