

Christopher Columbus and his contributions to America



CHISTOPHER COLUMBUS AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICA

Columbus was born in 1451 to a Merchant family in Genoa Italy. Not much is known about Columbus's early life up until he was a teenager. He first started his career in sailing on a merchant ship in the Mediterranean. He learned his navigation skills after his ship was attacked and sunk by French privateers off the coast of Portugal. Sailing on a piece of driftwood Columbus used the stars to find his way to Lisbon.

In the 1400s the Spanish wanted to find a fast way to get to the Far East like the Portuguese did with Africa. Then in 1492 Christopher Columbus had an idea that the earth was small, and that he could sail west to find the Far East. His plan was to set up trading posts like the Portuguese did in West Africa, and make relationships with those who produced spices, silk, and other luxuries. Also, because Columbus was a Christian, he wanted to spread Christianity to the natives. He went to four different countries; Portugal, France, England, and Spain. Spain rejected him until the Portuguese had a monopoly on the spice trade. This caused King Ferdinand and queen Isabella of Spain to fund his voyage in 1492.

Columbus set off west with his three ships Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria. After three months of sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean Columbus landed on an island believed to be in the Bahamas, and named it San Salvador after Jesus the Savior. " Though he did not really " discover" the New World—millions of people already lived there—his journeys marked the beginning of centuries of transatlantic conquest and colonization." Columbus thought that he had sailed to Asia, specifically the East Indies. Because he

thought he found the East Indies, he named the region he found the West Indies. Columbus and his men were greeted by the natives of San Salvador, Columbus described them as Indians – an inaccurate name which has been used throughout the Americas to identify the natives.

A few days later Columbus and his men sailed through out the Caribbean, passing more islands and giving them names. Eventually they discovered a large island he named Cuba. Cuba matched Marco Polo's description of eastern Asia, so Columbus assumed the island of Cuba was Japan. Beyond Cuba was another island, which turns out to be the most important due to the traces of gold found there. Columbus named it Hispaniola, known today as the Dominican Republic, after Spain. Columbus discovered this island when his ship the Santa Maria ran aground there.

Columbus left 40 men to found the first colony on Hispaniola and left them with enough supplies for a year as he sailed back to Spain with news of his achievement. Within months of returning to Spain on the Nina, Columbus showed the king and queen of Spain what he found in the new world on March 15, 1493. The king and queen were presented with gold and captured natives from the Bahamas. Columbus became a hero throughout Spain for his discovery of the New World. This was the highest point of Columbus's career. But soon his popularity would come to an end.

In late 1493 Columbus set sail with 17 ships on his second voyage to the West Indies. The reason for his second voyage was that the king and queen wanted more gold. Because of this Columbus was given 17 ships, 2, 500 men, and was to be governor of the lands he discovered. Columbus was a

great sailor. He sailed back to Hispaniola using his own navigation skills and routes, which he kept a secret.

When Columbus and his fleet hit Hispaniola, they discovered all of the 40 men left behind had been killed by the natives. News of this disaster reached Spain, and this raised the first doubts about Columbus's judgement.

Columbus found out a local chief killed the first colonists and that the same chief had lots of gold on his land. Columbus led some men into his territory where they started a gold mine.

The chief was angered by the invaders and fighting broke out. To scare the chief Columbus captured 3 of his captains and killed them in public. This made the natives angry and disturbed many of Columbus's men. What was worse was that there was no more gold left to mine. Columbus had sent letters on a ship to Spain exaggerating the amount of gold that was found on the island.

To make money for the monarchs Columbus suggested a slave trade to first convert the natives to Catholicism then sell them. Columbus sold hundreds of slaves to Spain. Most of the natives that remained fought against this injustice. Columbus fought against them.

When they were defeated Columbus made them pay gold to the Spanish. Those who didn't find enough gold were punished severely. Forced to look for gold the natives could not farm their lands. Many of the natives escaped to the hills where they were hunted. During the first few years 50, 000 natives died to hunger, war, and disease. ?????? Columbus's brutality made

him enemies in the colonies and back in Spain. In 1496 Columbus sailed <https://assignbuster.com/chistopher-columbus-and-his-contributions-to-america/>

back to Spain when to the king and queen of Spain heard about the atrocities in Hispaniola. So as Columbus sailed back to Spain, he left his brother Bartolomeo to take charge of the colonies. When Columbus went to Spain, he defended his actions to the king and queen. They listened to him and let him take a third voyage to Hispaniola in 1498.

At this point the colony in Hispaniola was in full anarchy. Columbus's brother Bartolomeo was a worse leader than Columbus. It had gotten so bad a rebellion had begun. The Columbus brothers were pushed out of power, and the monarchs of Spain sent an inspector to see the situation of the colony. When the inspector saw the colony, he put the Columbus brothers on trial for crimes in the colonies. They were found guilty and sent back to Spain in chains.

Columbus was then at the low point of his career. He was no longer in charge of the New World. Columbus, by then an old man, was granted one last voyage to the new world. The King did put one condition on Columbus. He was not allowed to go back to Hispaniola. On his last voyage Columbus sailed across the Caribbean for 2 years. He discovered Central America then sailed back to Spain where he died in 1506 at age 54.

Columbus was a good sailor but no hero. He exploited the colonial natives and killed thousands. However what Columbus did led Europe to control the New World and turn kingdoms like Spain and England into empires. " Even more significantly, he made the Atlantic crossing seem just an arduous journey rather than a terrifying step into the unknown" (historyworld. net).

His contributions helped establish colonies in the western hemisphere. But it came at the cost of many native lives. This is one of his many faults.

At the same time, he is the reason many of our ancestors were in the United States and other countries in the Americas. His first colony in the Caribbean spread into our country and more. His “ finding” the New World brought many opportunities for Europeans and many different people groups came here to start a new life. Many of those Europeans were our ancestors who came here and succeeded in starting a new life. Columbus is not a hero but his contribution affected our country in a good way. He was the first colonizer in the new world, and linked the Old and New worlds, bringing new technologies and cultures to both. He may not have done good things for America in his lifetime, but as he laid the ground work for those who have and for that he is remembered.

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