

Christopher Columbus & The Discovery of America

Julia McDonald

2 ESO Bilingual






Christopher Columbus

- ▶ Christopher Columbus was an explorer, a colonizer, and a navigator from the Republic of Genoa, in northwestern Italy.
- ▶ He was born between August 22 and October 31 in 1451. The exact date is not known.
- ▶ He died in Spain on May 20, 1506, when he was 54 years old.

His Life

- ▶ In 1473 Columbus began his apprenticeship as a business agent for wealthy families in Genoa.
- ▶ In 1476 he was part of a group who brought valuable goods to northern Europe on a convoy.
- ▶ Then he traveled around Europe and Western Africa and continued trading for many years.

His Life

- ▶ Columbus was very intelligent and ambitious.
 - ▶ He learned other languages aside from Italian, such as Latin, Portuguese and Castilian.
 - ▶ He read about astronomy, geography, history and philosophy.
- 

Religion

- ▶ He was Roman Catholic and was very interested in the Bible and in biblical prophecies.
- ▶ Towards the end of his life, Columbus wrote *Book of Prophecies* in which his career as an explorer is interpreted in a religious way.
- ▶ How do you think it was interpreted?

Background Information

- ▶ Europeans had been using the “Silk Road,” a safe land passage to China and India, for many years.
- ▶ There they traded silk, spices, and opiates, among other things.
- ▶ When the Ottoman Empire overthrew the Byzantine Empire in Constantinople (now called Istanbul) in Turkey, the “Silk Road” became much more difficult and dangerous. So, they needed to find another way to get there.

Silk Road




Geographical Considerations

- ▶ Even though some people thought that the world was flat, most people (including Columbus) had accepted that the world was round.
- ▶ Columbus wrongly estimated the distance from Europe to Asia, specifically from the Canary Islands to Japan. He thought that they were 3,700 km apart, but they were actually 19,600 km apart.

He thought the world was smaller than it was

Geographical Considerations

- ▶ Most European navigators decided that this voyage (viaje) was impossible.
 - ▶ However, Columbus was determined.
 - ▶ He knew a lot about the trade winds, which were key (clave) to his successful navigation.
- 

Looking for Funding

- ▶ Columbus first asked the King of Portugal, King John II, to fund his voyages but the king rejected his proposal because he thought that Columbus's estimation of travel distance was too short.
- ▶ He also asked Genoa and Venice if they would be willing to fund his trip, and they said no as well.
- ▶ He also asked King Henry VII of England, but the king's response was too late.

Spanish Funding

- ▶ In 1486 Columbus asked Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castille, who were the monarchs of the Iberian Peninsula.
- ▶ They also thought that his estimation of travel distance was too short, but in 1489 they gave him money and a letter which ordered all cities and towns under their power to give him food and housing for free.

Ferdinand II and Isabella I of Spain



Spanish Funding

- ▶ In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella finally agreed and agreed to fund a little over half of the voyage.
- ▶ The other half of the funding was from private Italian investors.
- ▶ The Spanish monarchs were unusually generous, even though some say that the monarchs didn't expect him to return.

The Contract

- ▶ Columbus made a contract with Ferdinand and Isabella.
- ▶ If he discovered new land, he would receive rewards:
 - He would be given the rank of “Admiral of the Ocean Sea” and Governor of all new land.
 - He had the right to nominate three people to govern the new land.

His Voyages

- ▶ Between 1492 and 1503 Columbus completed four round-trip voyages between Spain and the Americas.
- ▶ These voyages were the start of the European exploration and colonization of the American continents, later called the “New World.”
- ▶ Columbus was not the first explorer to reach the Americas from Europe (Leif Ericson from Norway was there almost 500 years before Columbus)


Leif Ericson



Leif Ericson's Journey



Voyages

- ▶ Columbus insisted that the lands he visited were part of the Asian continent, NOT the American continent.
 - ▶ This is probably why America isn't named after Columbus, but after a later Italian explorer named Amerigo Vespucci.
- 

Voyages

- ▶ The first voyage in 1492 happened during a time of western competition for power and money.
- ▶ The different kingdoms wanted to gain power and money from the use of trade routes and colonies.
- ▶ Spain agreed to fund his voyages because the monarchs realized that they could profit from (sacar provecho de) a new discovery.

First Voyage – “Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492”

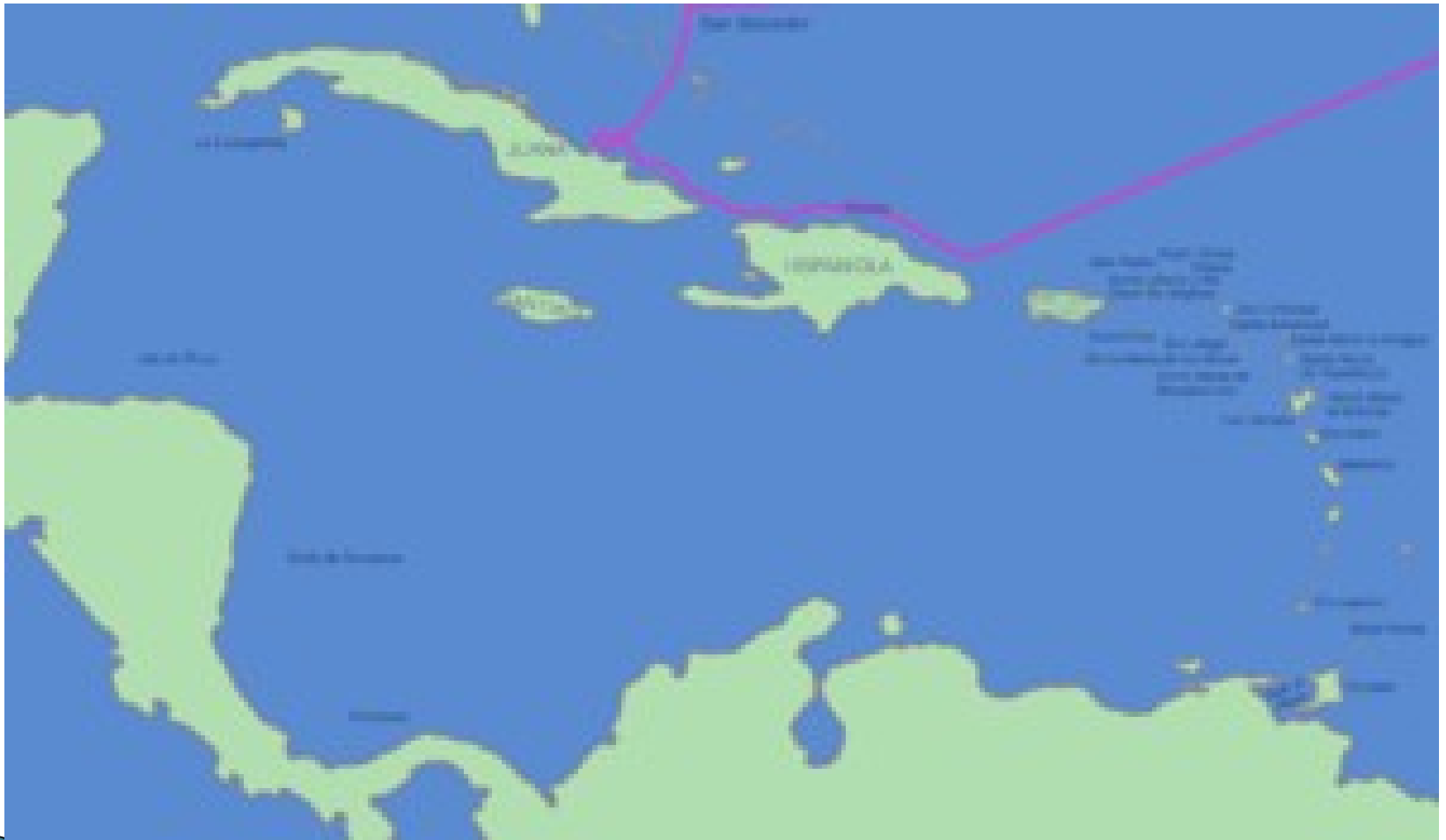
- ▶ On August 3, 1492, Columbus left from Huelva in three ships:
- ▶ **Santa María** – the larger of the three
- ▶ **Pinta**
- ▶ **Santa Clara**, also called **Niña**
- ▶ He first sailed to the Canary Islands to repair his ship and restock. He left on September 6.



First Voyage: August 3, 1492 – March 15, 1493.

- ▶ The voyage lasted for 5 weeks. They first saw land on October 12 and landed in The Bahamas (but at that point he called it San Salvador).
- ▶ The indigenous people that he found there were friendly and peaceful. He kidnapped 10–25 natives and took them back to Spain. Only about 8 survived the journey.
- ▶ He also explored the coast of Cuba, Hispaniola, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It is important to remember that these places all had different names back then.

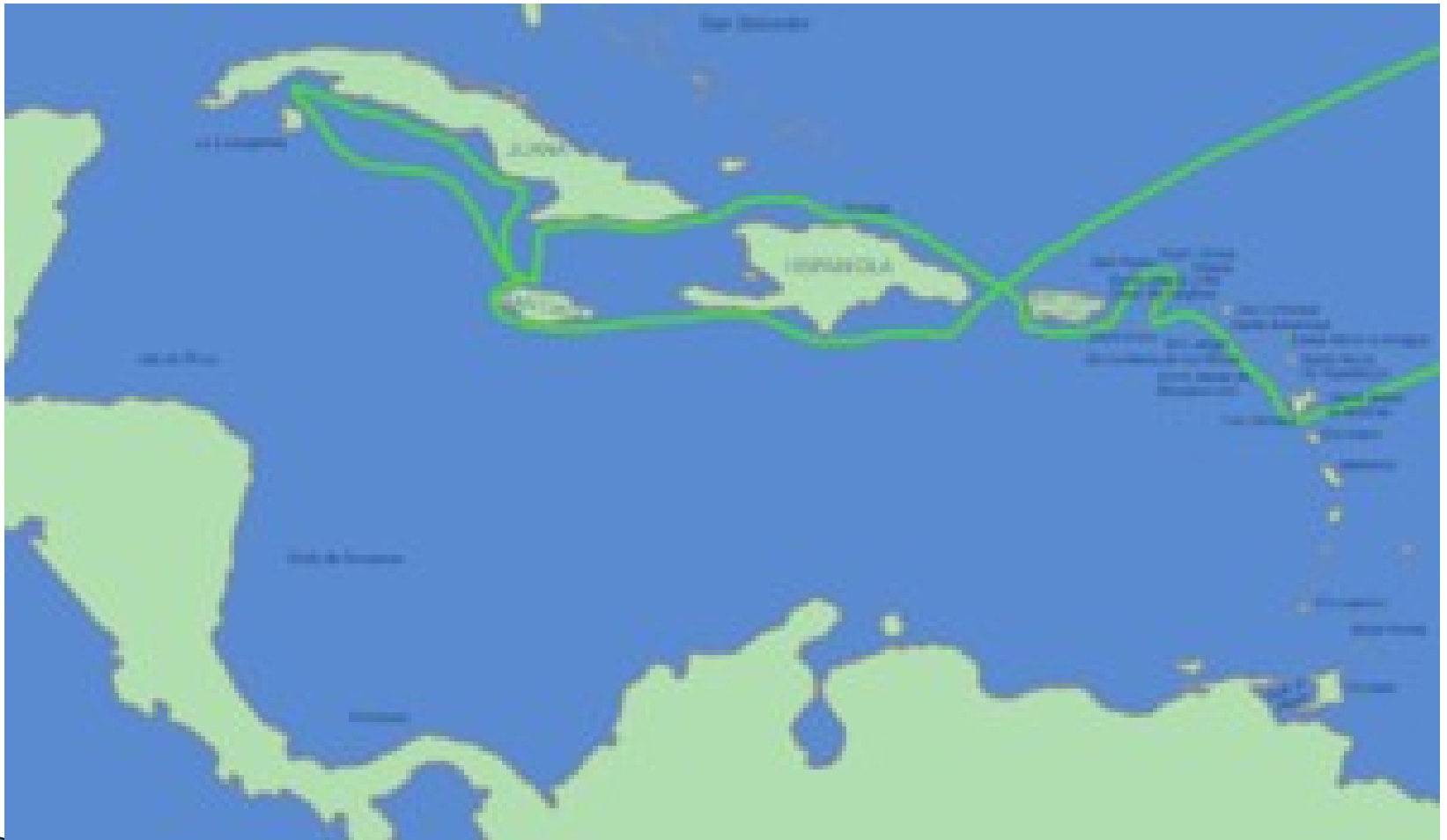
First Voyage



Second Voyage: September 24, 1493 – September 1494

- ▶ Columbus left Cádiz on September 24, 1493 to find new territories.
- ▶ He went with 17 ships carrying supplies and about 1,200 men to colonize the region.
- ▶ The colonists included priests, farmers and soldiers.
- ▶ His goals were to explore the new land, to settle there and to convert the natives into Christians.

Second Voyage



Third Voyage: May 30, 1498–

This third voyage reached the South American coast



Fourth Voyage: May 11, 1502 – November 7, 1504.



Governance

- ▶ After his first voyage, Columbus became the Governor of the Indies. However, by the end of his third voyage, he was physically and mentally exhausted. He sent two ships to Spain to ask the monarchs if they would appoint (designate) somebody to help him.
- ▶ The Court appointed Francisco de Bobadilla who was given complete control as governor.
- ▶ Francisco de Bobadilla had heard accusations that Columbus was a tyrant, so he imprisoned him for one year. Witnesses say that he used “barbaric acts of torture to govern Hispaniola.”

Columbus went back to Spain on October 1, 1500.

Later Life

- ▶ Christopher Columbus wrote two books:
- ▶ *Book of Privileges* (1502): This book detailed and documented the rewards (las recompensas) from the Spanish Crown.
- ▶ *Book of Prophecies* (1505): Parts of the Bible were used to explain his achievements (logros) as an explorer in the context of Christianity.

Death

- ▶ Columbus died on May 20, 1506 at about age 55 in Valladolid.
 - ▶ When he died he was still convinced that his journeys had been along the coast of Asia.
 - ▶ He never accepted the fact that he had reached the Americas.
- 