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## Unit 8:2 Columbus

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The voyage of Columbus in 1492 on the *Nina*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria* is well known after being sponsored by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. After five centuries, Columbus remains a mysterious and controversial figure who has been variously described as one of the greatest mariners in history, a visionary genius, a mystic, a national hero, a failed administrator, a naive entrepreneur, and a ruthless and greedy imperialist.

The widely published report of his voyage of 1492 made Columbus famous throughout Europe and secured for him the title of **Admiral of the Ocean Sea** and further royal patronage. Columbus, who never abandoned the belief that he had reached Asia, led three more expeditions to the Caribbean. But intrigue and his own administrative failings brought disappointment and political obscurity to his final years.

Millions of people lived in an area some five times the size of Europe. In strikingly diverse habitats and climates they developed possibly the most varied and productive agriculture in the world. Their lifestyles and belief systems differed widely and they spoke hundreds of distinct languages.

Throughout the hemisphere, states and centers of high civilization had risen and fallen. The dynamic Mexica (Aztec) and Inca empires were still expanding at this time and internal migration and warfare were common. The peoples did not see themselves as part of an entity. Only later would this area be given a unifying name—America—and the people labeled "Indians" by Europe, mistaking that they had landed in India.

(Source: Library of Congress)

### Columbus' 1<sup>st</sup> Voyage 1492-1493



*Unit 8:2: Columbus Continued***Excerpts from Columbus' log for Friday, October 12, 1492**

"The land was first seen by a sailor called Rodrigo de Triana. . . .Presently they descried people, naked, and the Admiral [**Columbus**] landed in the boat, which was armed, along with Martin Alonzo Pinzon, and Vincent Yanez his brother, captain of the *Nina*. . . .The Admiral

called upon the two Captains, and the rest of the crew who landed, as also to Rodrigo de Escovedo notary of the fleet, and Rodrigo Sanchez, of Segovia, to bear witness that he before all others took possession (as in fact he did) of that island for the King and Queen his sovereigns, making the requisite declarations, which are more at large set down here in writing. Numbers of the people of the island straightway collected together. Here follow the precise words of the Admiral: 'As I saw that they were very friendly to us, and perceived that they could be much more easily converted to our holy faith by gentle means than by force, I presented them with some red caps, and strings of beads to wear upon the neck, and many other trifles of small value, wherewith they were much delighted, and became wonderfully attached to us. It appears to me, that the people are ingenious, and would be good servants and I am of opinion that they would very readily become Christians, as they appear to have no religion. They very quickly learn such words as are spoken to them. If it please our Lord, I intend at my return to carry home six of them to your Highnesses, that they may learn our language. I saw no beasts in the island, nor any sort of animals except parrots.' These are the words of the Admiral.

1. Who sponsored Columbus' voyage?

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2. Why would Columbus be a controversial figure? (Hint: impact on natives)

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3. Did Columbus know that he had "discovered" new lands?

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4. Why were the natives called "Indians" by the Europeans?

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5. What did Columbus declare upon landing?

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6. How did Columbus describe the "Indians" he met?

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