

OVERVIEW

- Columbus sailed the ocean blue, in 1492, right? But he didn't discover America, and he would agree with the statement. Columbus thought he had reached Asia; it was only as the Spanish who came after him reached the mainland and entered the interior, that they came to realize that they had landed on two continents totally unknown to Europeans. Thereafter, began the naming of the continent, and the greatest exchange of food, technology, people, animals, and disease, in all human history.

Unit Goals

- Students will have a basic understanding of events surrounding Columbus's voyage; his understanding of global geography; the reasons for his voyage, and what he found, and did, once he landed in the Caribbean.
- Understanding of the Taino - the people who met Columbus - will be gained, of their culture, lifestyle, religious beliefs, and how the Spaniards interacted with them, and recorded parts of their culture for posterity.
- Students will learn how America got its name, and the significant parts played by Amerigo Vespucci, Matthias Ringmann and Martin Waldseemuller, in that naming.
- Finally, students will gain a basic sense of what the Columbian Exchange was; how scholars are still uncertain about many facets of it; and how it changed world history.

Schedule:

- Monday: Context – **Isabel and Fernando**. Two monarchs and the country they forged; their rise to power, and differences in the two kingdoms they ruled. War with Portugal; consequences for Spain; conclusion of the Reconquista; and policies towards Spanish Jews. Impudence behind patronage of Columbus.
- Tuesday: **Columbus and the Taino**. Context of Columbus's voyage. His voyage; insights on native Tainos. Who were they? Language and culture; how Spanish missionaries recorded their cultural traits for posterity. Columbus's behavior against them; possible reasons for it; Spanish government's response; imprisonment. Significance.
- Wednesday: **Amerigo Vespucci and How America got its Name**: Did Columbus discover America, or was it Amerigo Vespucci? Vespucci's life before his voyages. His role in the early voyages; the letters he writes of his journeys; how his name was bequeathed to a Continent, by two German intellectuals. What did these early explorers know of the lands they encountered?
- Thursday: **Vasco Nunez de Balboa** - Accomplishments – What did Balboa achieve to give him lasting fame? Why was this significant for the Spanish? Why was he killed by his own? Highlight rivalries among Spaniards, early in the Conquest. How secure was authority, and how established was government?
- Friday: **The Columbian Exchange** – Origin of the term; what was brought to the Americas; what was taken back to the old world? Population numbers, and disease; scholarly debates. Significance to world history.

Resources

- Unit summaries on www.huntthepast.com, for use in this lesson plan: Isabel and Fernando; The Genoese who Changed History: Christopher Columbus, Tainos, Amerigo Vespucci, How America got its Name, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, Columbian Exchange.
- Books, particularly primary sources, such as letters and histories written by the participants. What did the participants have to say of their own doings in the Americas?
- Videos, books, images, activities, and maps provided by www.huntthepast.com, as well as any the instructor may deem appropriate, are to be utilized as teaching aids

Essential Skills

- Introductory knowledge of who Queen Isabel and King Fernando, Christopher Columbus, and Amerigo Vespucci were, and their significance (Likewise, Ringmann and Waldseemuller's importance should be highlighted and understood.)
- Know who the Tainos were, some key aspects of their culture, and why they did not fare well when the Spanish arrived.
- Know the importance of the Columbian Exchange; how it altered world history, and why Columbus, though reviled, is a significant individual in human history.
- Students should also begin to put things in context - a very necessary skill in understanding history.