

Columbus's plan was very risky at the time. No one knew the size of the great ocean to the west of Europe. Some people claimed that more than 10,000 miles separated Europe from the Indies. Traveling such a long distance seemed impossible. Navigating the open sea was hard, and crews would need enough food and water to last for months. Columbus believed such a voyage was possible. He was convinced that the Atlantic Ocean was much smaller than commonly thought.

Columbus went to Spain to ask **King Ferdinand** and **Queen Isabella** for help. Spain was fighting the kingdom of Granada, which was held by the Moors. These North African Muslims had conquered the area in the early Middle Ages. Ferdinand and Isabella did not answer Columbus for six years because they were trying to capture Granada. In the meantime, he failed to get support from other European leaders.

Finally, in January 1492 Spain won Granada, and the **Reconquista** (re-kawng-KEE-stah)—the ongoing struggle to drive the Moors from Spain—ended. Ferdinand and Isabella agreed to pay for Columbus's trip. They hoped that Columbus would find a new sea route to the Indies so that Spain could better compete with Portugal.

Ferdinand and Isabella ordered Columbus to bring back any "Pearls, Precious Stones, Gold, Silver, Spiceries, and other Things and Merchandise of whatever kind, name or description that may be." They told him to claim for Spain any lands he explored. They promised to reward Columbus with some of the gold he sent back to Spain and with profits from any trading. In addition, he would become **viceroy**, or royal governor, of the lands he explored.

✓ **Reading Check: Summarizing** What did King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella hope to gain from Columbus's trip?

★ Crossing the Ocean

On August 3, 1492, just before sunrise, Columbus's three ships set sail. The *Niña* and the *Pinta* were caravels. Columbus sailed in the larger *Santa María*. The cramped ships were crewed by some 90 sailors in all and carried a year's worth of supplies.

Columbus sailed for the Canary Islands off the west coast of Africa. From there he caught a wind that blew his ships west across the Atlantic Ocean. The tiny fleet made good progress. Soon, the ships passed the limits of Columbus's maps. They were sailing into unknown waters. The crew grew more and more worried after a month passed with no sight of land. "Here the people could stand it no longer, and complained of the long voyage," wrote Columbus in his journal.

Just a few days later, the crew began to see signs that land was near. Columbus promised a reward "to him who first sang out that he saw land." On October 12, 1492, a lookout cried "Land! Land!" The journey from the Canary Islands had taken 33 days.



BIOGRAPHY

Queen Isabella

1451–1504

Queen Isabella was the daughter of the ruler of the powerful kingdom of Castile (ka-STEEL). At the age of 18, she married Ferdinand. He was the heir to the throne of Aragon, which was another powerful Spanish kingdom. Their marriage united the houses of Aragon and Castile. Isabella became queen of Castile in 1474.

During her reign, Isabella financed and helped direct Castile's military operations. When Christopher Columbus came to the royal court, Isabella's support proved essential to his cause. When she died in 1504, Spain was about to become one of the most powerful nations on Earth. How did Queen Isabella strengthen Spain's power?

Columbus's First Explorations

The ships landed on an island in the Bahamas. Columbus called the island San Salvador, which means "Holy Savior." Columbus thought that he was near the coast of China or the islands of Japan. He did not realize that he had reached a different continent entirely.

Columbus searched for riches on other islands, including one he called Hispaniola. There he met the Taino (TY-noh). He called these people Indians because he believed that he had landed in the fabled Indies. The Taino lived in small, peaceful farming villages. Columbus described them as "very well built, with very handsome bodies and very good faces." He also noted that the Taino were "so generous . . . that no one would believe it who has not seen it. They never refuse [to give] anything which they possess, if it be asked of them."

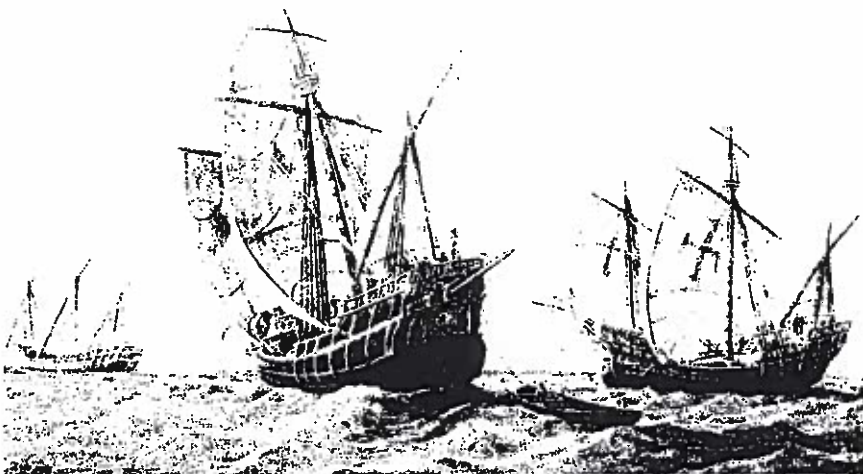
Columbus had little desire to learn about the Taino's culture. He and his crew were more interested in discovering gold. "There may be many things that I don't know," he wrote in his journal. "But I do not wish to delay but to discover and go to many islands to find gold." Columbus and his search parties explored several islands. They asked the Taino if they knew of any wealthy rulers, gold mines, or great palaces. They collected little gold but saw many natural wonders. Columbus described these sights in a letter.



"All [these islands] are beautiful, of a thousand shapes, and all are accessible [reachable] and filled with trees of a thousand kinds and tall, and they seem to touch the sky."

—Christopher Columbus, from *The Four Voyages of Columbus*,
edited by Cecil Jane

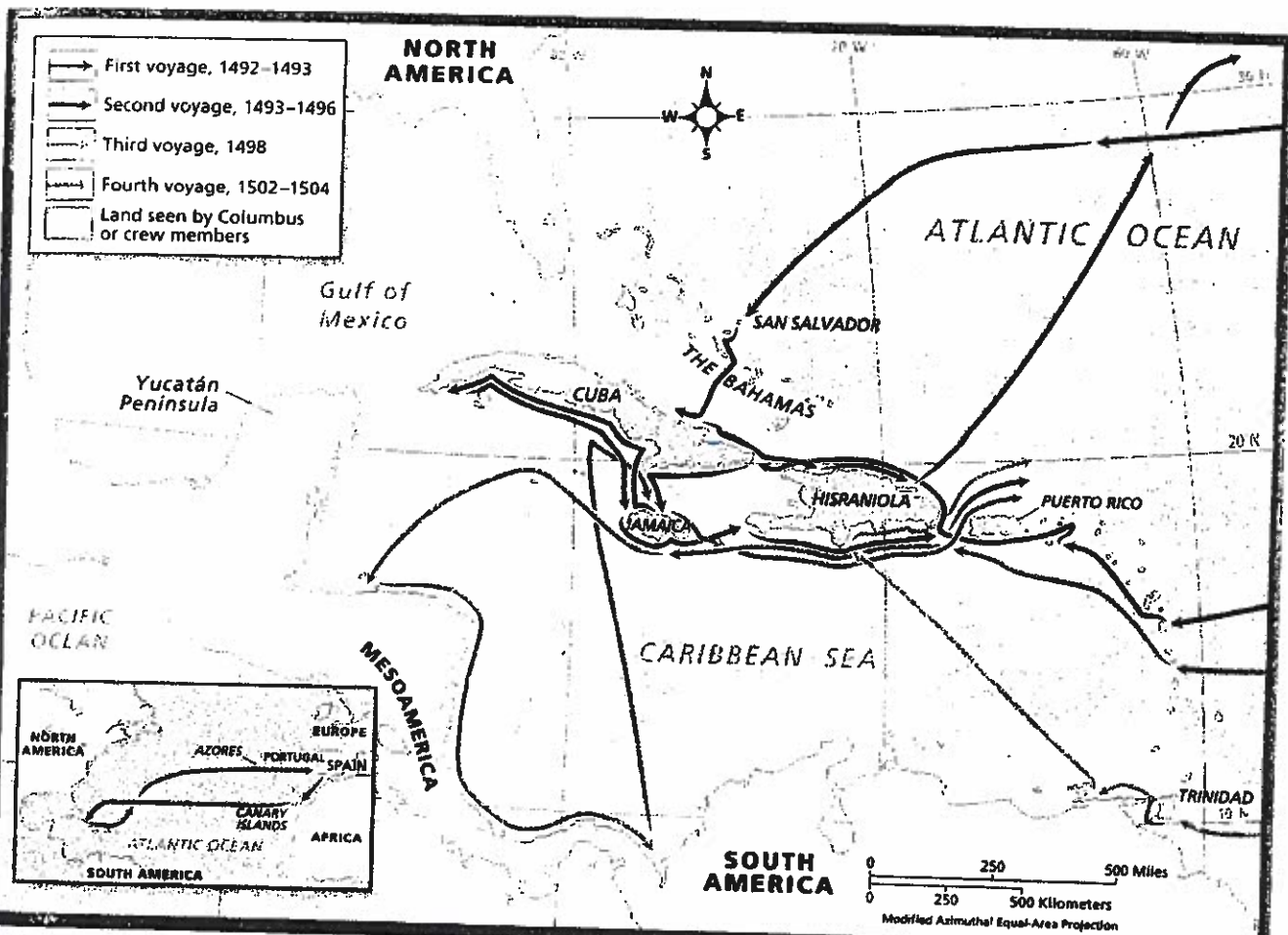
Columbus's small fleet faced great risks on its voyage across the Atlantic Ocean.



Columbus spent more than two months exploring. Then he decided that he had found enough gold and local treasures to return to Spain. Before he and his men left, however, the *Santa María* struck a coral reef and sank. There was not enough room for all of the sailors on the *Niña* and *Pinta*. Instead, Columbus and his men built a small colony on the north coast of Hispaniola. They called it La Navidad, the Spanish word for Christmas. Columbus left about 40 of his men at La Navidad and promised to return for them soon. He then boarded the *Niña* and set sail for Spain in January of 1493.

✓ **Reading Check: Finding the Main Idea** What interested Columbus most on his first voyage to the Americas?

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Columbus's Voyages, 1492-1504

Interpreting Maps Christopher Columbus made four trips to the Americas over a 12-year period. During these voyages, Columbus learned much about the islands and waters of the Caribbean Sea.

Skills Assessment The World in Spatial Terms What Caribbean islands did Columbus pass by on his last three return voyages?

★ Europe Learns of Columbus's Voyage

After a stormy return trip, Columbus finally reached Spain. He wrote a letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella boasting of the wealth that lay across the ocean. The king and queen were excited by Columbus's news. They were even more pleased when he brought them gold nuggets and rare treasures. As a reward for his discoveries, Ferdinand and Isabella made Columbus an admiral and a governor.

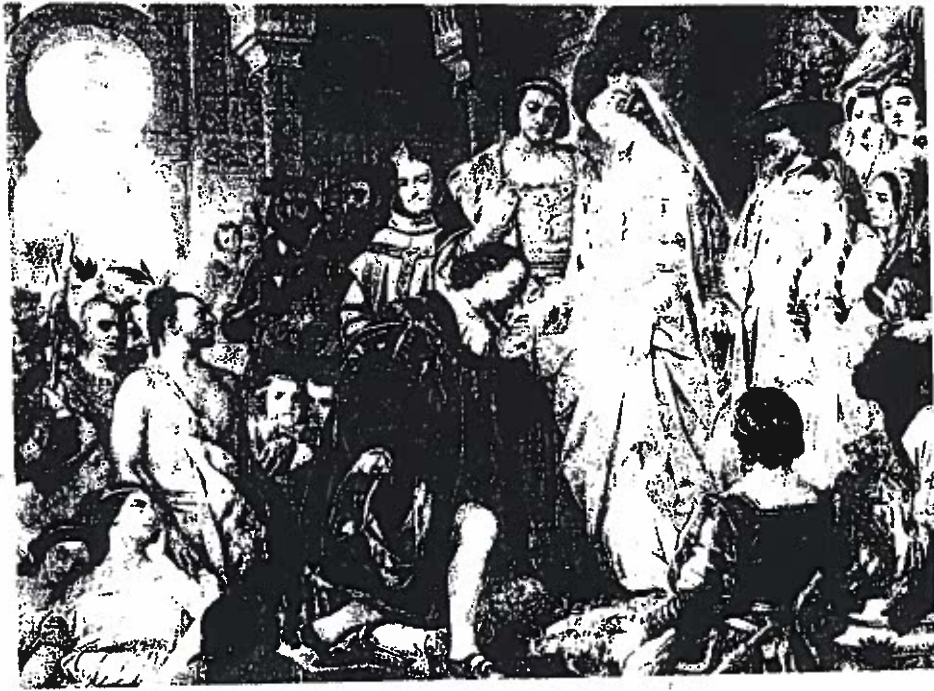
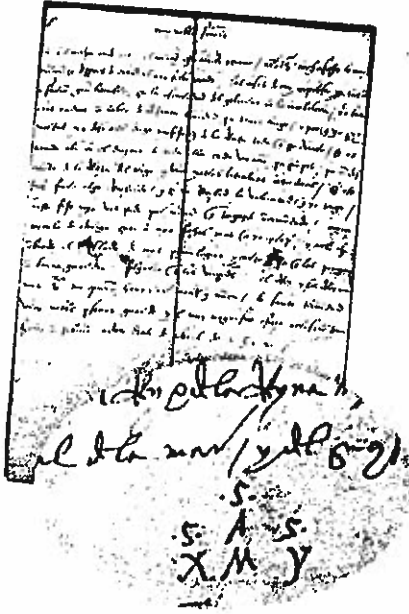


“We, considering the risk and danger to which you have exposed yourself for our service . . . [award you] the said offices of Admiral of the said Ocean Sea, . . . and of viceroy and governor of the said islands and mainland.”

—King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, quoted in *The Conquest of Paradise*, by Kirkpatrick Sale

Analyzing Primary Sources
Identifying Points of View
 Why did Ferdinand and Isabella believe that Columbus deserved a reward?

Columbus returned to Spain to tell King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella about his discovery and present to them some of the people and treasures that he had encountered. The letter below is believed to have been written by Columbus.



THE GRANGER COLLECTION

Columbus also brought several Taino to the Spanish court with him. He planned to teach them Spanish so they could help him speak with the Taino on his future voyages. Isabella wanted priests to convert the Taino to Christianity by changing their religious beliefs. However, Columbus believed that it was acceptable to enslave American Indians even if they became Christians.

Columbus began preparing almost immediately for a second trip across the Atlantic Ocean with more ships and crew. He hoped to find greater amounts of treasure.

News of Columbus's achievement spread beyond Spain. Ferdinand persuaded Pope Alexander VI to create the **Line of Demarcation**. This was an imaginary boundary line showing the land that Spain could explore and claim. Spain could claim the land that was west of this line.

Portuguese king John II was unhappy with this arrangement, which he felt favored Spain. To prevent conflict, the leaders of the two nations chose to compromise. Spain and Portugal signed the **Treaty of Tordesillas** (tawr-day-SEEL-yahs) in June 1494, which moved the Line of Demarcation some 800 miles farther west. This gave Portugal more opportunity to claim lands unexplored by other Europeans.

✓ **Reading Check: Analyzing Information** What was done in response to Portugal's unhappiness with the Line of Demarcation?

✦ Columbus's Later Voyages

Columbus returned to La Navidad in 1493 on his second voyage. He found that the colony had been destroyed and that all the sailors had been killed. Columbus was disappointed but began building new settlements on the islands. In 1498 Columbus became the first European explorer to see South America. He then returned to Hispaniola.

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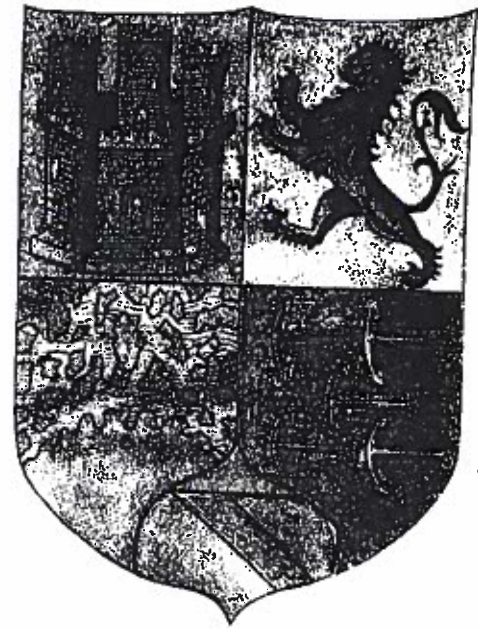
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Although Columbus was the governor of these new Spanish territories, he spent his time exploring. The living conditions in the colonies grew poor, partly because the Spaniards had difficulty growing crops in the tropical climate. Columbus fought many small battles with the Taino. He enslaved the Taino he defeated despite Isabella's instructions not to do so.

These problems made Ferdinand and Isabella unhappy with Columbus. In 1500 they removed him from his post as governor. When he returned to Spain, Columbus pleaded to make one last voyage to the Americas. They agreed, and he set sail in 1502. The ships ran into bad weather off the coast of Central America and they wrecked on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. There Columbus wrote in his journal that the sailors had "nothing to look forward to but death." They spent a year on Jamaica before being rescued by Spanish colonists from Hispaniola. In 1504 Columbus returned to Spain a broken man.

Columbus lived for two more years in very poor health. His share of the royal income from the Caribbean had made him wealthy. However, he was too sick to participate in the royal court. Columbus often complained to family and friends that those he had served had forgotten him. In 1506 he died "unnoticed and unsung," according to one modern historian. It would be years before Europeans realized the impact of Columbus on their world.

✓ **Reading Check: Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** Why were the later voyages of Columbus less successful than his first?



THE GRANGER COLLECTION

Interpreting the Visual Record

A royal gift Columbus was granted this coat of arms for his achievements. What do you think the different images on the coat of arms represent?

Section 2 Review

Go **Homework**
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Online
 keyword: SF3 HP2

1 **Define and explain:**
 • viceroy
 • convert

2 **Identify and explain:**
 • Christopher Columbus
 • King Ferdinand
 • Queen Isabella
 • Reconquista
 • Line of Demarcation
 • Treaty of Tordesillas

3 **Sequencing** Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to organize the information you have learned about Columbus's four voyages.

Date	Results
1492	
1493	
1498	
1502	

4 **Finding the Main Idea**
 a. Do you think Columbus's voyages succeeded or failed? Explain your answer.
 b. What do you think would have happened in the Spanish settlements if Isabella and Ferdinand had not removed Columbus from his post as viceroy?

5 **Writing and Critical Thinking**
Identifying Cause and Effect Imagine that you are an adviser to the Portuguese king in 1493. Prepare a short report describing the reasons for and effects of the voyage Columbus has just made.
 Consider the following:
 • Europeans' goal of finding a new sea route to Asia
 • the people and gold Columbus encountered in the Americas
 • the Line of Demarcation