**Biography: Christopher Columbus**

**Early years – *Education and Experience***

Columbus was born in 1451 in Genoa on the northwest coast of Italy. Genoa was an important seaport. Its ships traded throughout the Mediterranean region. Christopher was the eldest of five children. Christopher and his brothers learned basic Latin and mathematics, though Christopher's formal education ended at about age 14.

Christopher's father pushed him into a business career, and Christopher began to sail on trading trips. In 1476, he settled in Lisbon, Portugal. In Lisbon, Columbus joined his brother Bartholomew to draw and sell maps. Between 1480 and 1485, Columbus participated in several expeditions to Africa. On these voyages, Columbus gained experience navigating a ship, sailing a caravel and of the Atlantic wind systems.

**Columbus’s Plan – *Objectives for Exploring***

By the 1480’s, the Portuguese were trying to reach the Indies—what are now India, China, the East Indies (southeastern Asia), and Japan—by sailing around Africa. By doing this, they hoped to gain direct access to gold, silk, gems, and spices. While Portuguese sailors were trying to reach Asia by sailing around Africa, Columbus proposed what he believed to be an easier route—sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean.

Columbus's plan was based in part on two major miscalculations. First, he underestimated the size of the world. Columbus also mistakenly believed that most of the world consisted of land rather than water. This mistake led him to conclude that Asia extended much farther east than it actually did.

**Presenting the Plan – *Benefits for the King and Queen***

About 1483, Columbus gained audiences with King John II of Portugal. The king placed Columbus's proposal before his council, which rejected it on the correct belief that he had greatly underestimated the length of the journey. The king’s advisers concluded that Portugal’s resources would be better invested in finding a route around Africa to Asia.

In 1485, Columbus and his son went to Spain, a bitter rival of Portugal. Although they were cautious, the Spanish monarchs were nevertheless willing to consider a plan that could give them an advantage over Portugal in the race for Asia. Columbus also appealed to the intensely religious monarchs by promising to use the proceeds from his expedition to spread Christianity.

Source: López-Portillo, José-Juan. "Columbus, Christopher." *World Book Student.* World Book, 2015. Web. 10 May 2015.