

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Age of Exploration**

### ***Christopher Columbus***



**Directions:** Read the following passage then answer the questions.

#### **Columbus Sets Sail: Big Dreams and Bigger Hurdles**

Christopher Columbus wasn't the first to think the Earth was round. Most people knew that by the 1400s. But he did have a big, bold idea: to sail west to get to the east! Nobody had tried this at that time. And finding a new route to Asia was a huge deal back then. Everyone wanted a cheaper, faster way to get those rare spices and smooth silks.

The problem? Columbus had no money for this big trip. He asked kings and queens from different countries. Most just laughed at him or said no. It took nearly a decade, but his big break came when Spain's Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand gave him the nod. They decided to take a chance on him. In 1492, these monarchs gave Columbus three ships: the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. Then Columbus embarked on a voyage into the unknown.

#### **Days Turn to Weeks...**

Imagine being on a ship for weeks with nothing but water all around, lost in an unknown sea. That's how Columbus's crew felt. They were scared. They missed their homes. Some wanted to turn the ship around and go back. Others whispered about not following Columbus's orders anymore. They thought that he didn't know the way. Columbus tried to cheer them up. He promised them rewards. He told them they'd find land soon. The crew was angry. They talked about mutiny.

Just when things got really bad, they saw signs like birds and floating twigs. This meant that land was near! Then they saw it. Land ho! This was the New World.

#### **Gold Fever, Greed, and Conquest**

When Columbus and his men stepped foot on the New World, they met native folks called the Taino. At first, relations were friendly, like when you meet someone new at school. But Columbus and his men wanted gold – lots of it!

Columbus had heard tales of gold in the hills. He forced the Taino people to find gold for him. If they didn't find enough, he wounded or killed them. Columbus and his crew weren't kind to the Taino. They enslaved them, working many of them to death. Columbus and his men devastated them.

#### **The Columbian Exchange**

Columbus's achievement is tainted with brutality. But the European discovery of these lands was an important moment in history. From then on, agriculture, animals, ideas, and people went back and forth from Europe to the New World. We know this as the Columbian Exchange. Crops like tobacco, corn, and tomatoes came to Europe. Wheat, bananas, and sugar cane flowed to the Americas. New animals were introduced to America too, like horses, sheep, and pigs. Sadly, the Europeans also shared new diseases with the natives. The world would never be the same.

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## Age of Exploration

### *Christopher Columbus*



**Directions:** Read the following passage then answer the questions.

### Reading Questions

1. What was Columbus's new idea? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why do you think most monarchs turned down Columbus? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What qualities did Columbus possess that may have helped or hindered his journey? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Why do you believe this?

5. How did seeing birds and floating twigs affect Columbus and his crew? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Why do you think Columbus and his crew treated the Taino people so poorly? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How do you think the discovery of the New World affected other countries in Europe? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Is Christopher Columbus a hero or a villain and should he be celebrated? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Why do you believe this?

10. What are some positive and negative effects of the Columbian Exchange? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_