

Scholastic Atlas of Exploration
by Dinah Starkey

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

The port of Genoa in Italy was an exciting place for adventurers in the late 15th century. In the harbor sailors from as far away as Africa and Iceland swapped stories of the sea. A young Genoese boy named Christopher Columbus listened. The stories made him want to sail the oceans, and his seafaring adventures began at the age of 14. These journeys, and conversations with his mapmaker brother, gave Columbus the idea for a grand voyage. He believed he could reach Asia by going west across the Atlantic Ocean. Columbus hoped to bring back precious silks and spices by sailing on this new route.



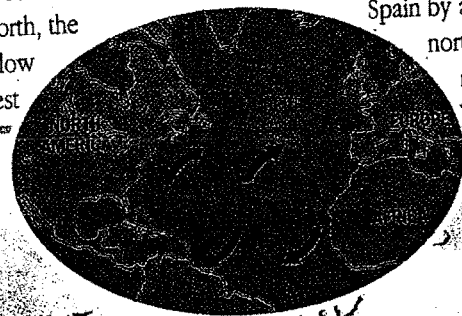
Such a daring expedition was very costly, and it was years before Columbus found someone who would pay for the trip. Eventually, though, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain agreed to provide the ships, sailors, and supplies that Columbus needed. In 1492 Columbus was able to set sail from the Spanish port of Palos.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC WINDS

Columbus was able to cross the North Atlantic because he understood the ocean's winds. In the north, the winds blow from west

to east, but further south, they blow the opposite way, from east to west. Columbus kept to the south on his outward journey and returned to

Spain by a northern route.



LANDFALL

On October 12, 1492, after sailing for 33 days, the ships arrived at a small island in the Bahamas. We cannot be sure exactly which island it was, although scholars think it was San Salvador. The people living on the island called it Guanahani. The islanders were curious and friendly.

They came out in canoes to meet the ships. Columbus and the sailors went ashore carrying the Spanish banner and the admiral's flag, and they claimed the island for Spain.



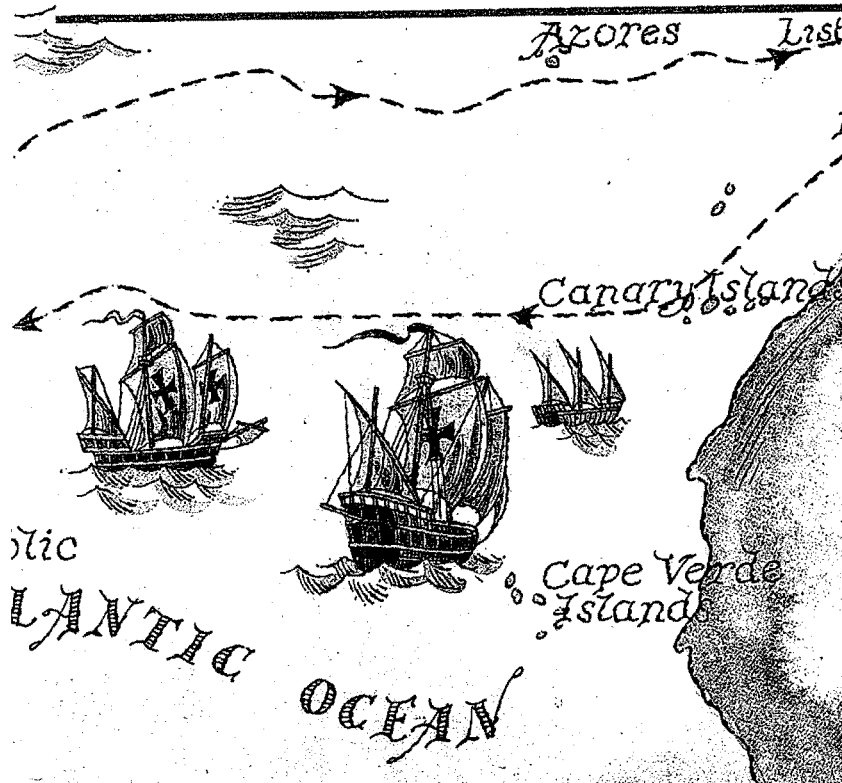
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THE NATIVE PEOPLES

The Arawak people living on the islands Columbus reached were generous and peace-loving. They were happy to share their food and

possessions with the strangers who arrived at their shore. However, the sailors became greedy. They seized cotton, cinnamon, and precious stones. Later, they took prisoners from among the islanders to sell as slaves.

The Arawaks caught diseases such as smallpox from the Spaniards, which killed them in large numbers. Fifty years after Columbus' expedition first set sail, Hispaniola's native population of about 250,000 had all died out.



Explorers' Supplies

Columbus' three ships carried enough supplies for a year. They took:

- BARRELS OF FRESH WATER
- JARS OF OIL
- SALT
- FLOUR
- SALTED MEATS
- NETS
- HOOKS AND FISHING LINES
- WOOD FOR FUEL
- SACKING TO SLEEP ON
- BEADS AND RED WOOLEN CAPS FOR TRADING

ROUTE TO THE INDIES?

Columbus wanted to be the first person to find a western sea route from Europe to the Indies (the name given to Southeast Asia, India and Indochina). Like other Europeans at that time, he did not know that North and



South America lay in the way. When he landed on one of the islands in the Bahamas, he was sure that he had in fact

reached somewhere in the Indies. It wasn't until much later that Columbus discovered his mistake. This is why he called the inhabitants of the island "Indians," and why the islands off the east coast of America are known today as the West Indies.

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LIFE ON BOARD



The sailors on board Columbus' ships spent much of their time, both night and day, up in the rigging, adjusting the sails to make the ships travel as fast as possible.

They cooked their food on deck in large pots heated by a wood fire. Only one hot meal was served each day, and that was at 11 o'clock, when the men on watch came off duty to be replaced by a new group of men.

The crew squatted on deck to eat, drinking broth from bowls and picking out the meat and fish with their fingers. They also ate hard bread with their meals.

When not working, sailors sometimes fished from the ship's deck. Fresh fish for lunch was considered a treat.

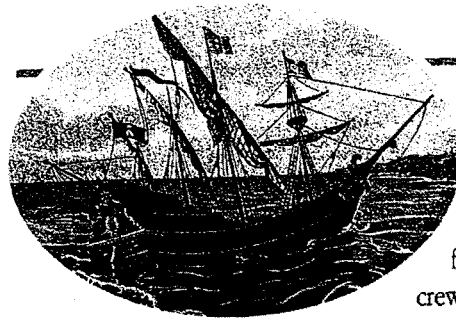
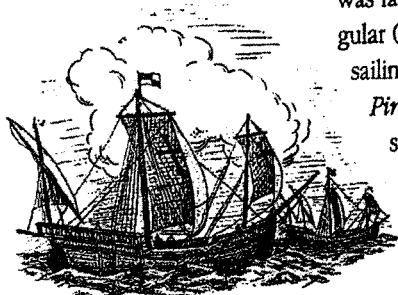


The captain of the ship slept in a cabin, but the sailors slept on rough sacks on deck, wherever they could find a spot.

THE SHIPS

Columbus took three ships on his journey west: the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*.

All three ships were caravels—tall-sided sailing ships with three masts that first appeared in the 15th century. The *Niña* was fast and agile with triangular (or lateen) sails, good for sailing against the wind; the *Pinta* was larger and square-sailed. These sails were better for sailing with the wind.

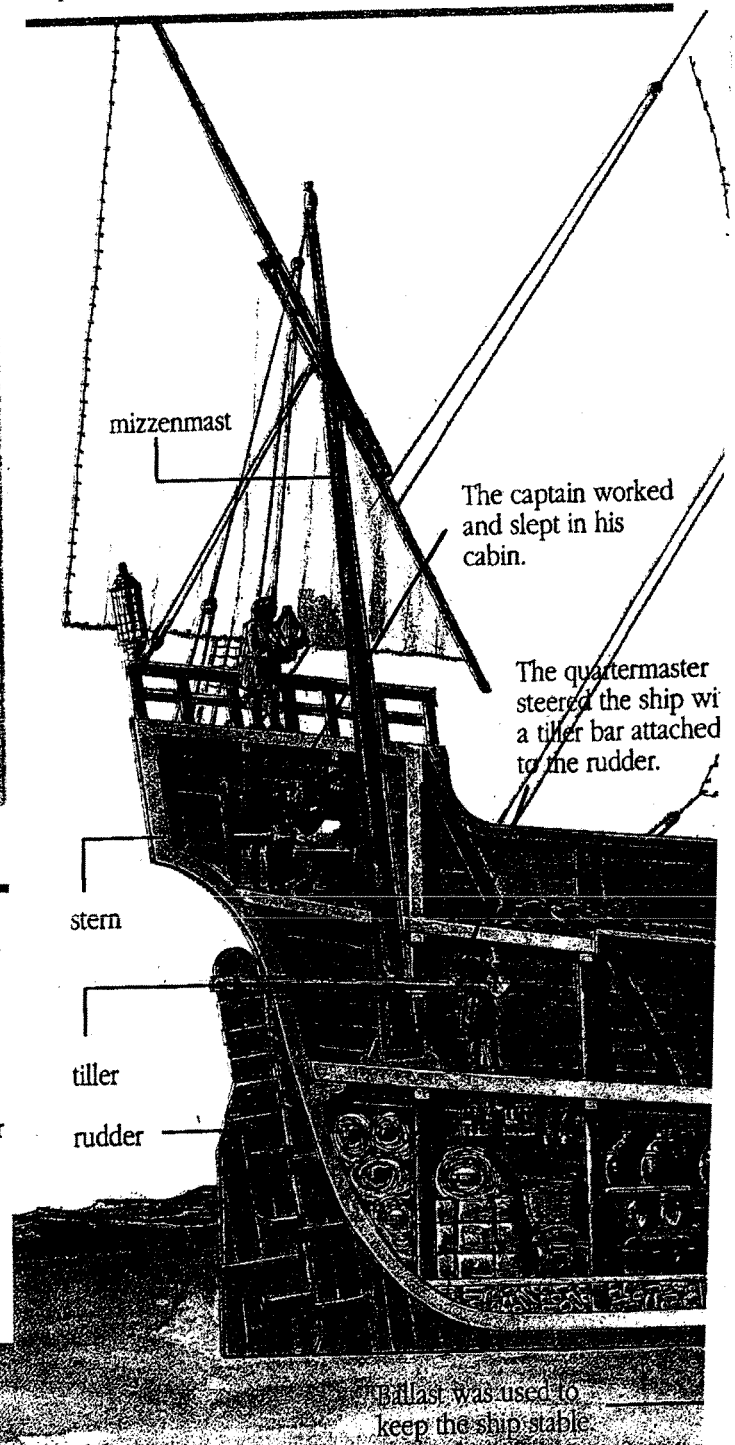


from the Canary Islands in a little more than a month. This was a fast crossing, and the crew arrived in the

THE SANTA MARIA

Columbus was captain of the *Santa Maria*, the biggest of the ships. It crossed the Atlantic

Bahamas not only alive but fit and well. Modern replicas (working copies) of the ship have never been as fast as the *Santa Maria*.



mizzenmast

The captain worked and slept in his cabin.

The quartermaster steered the ship with a tiller bar attached to the rudder.

stern

tiller

rudder

Ballast was used to keep the ship stable.

INSTRUMENTS FOR NAVIGATION

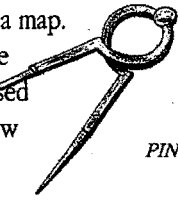
Columbus used simple instruments to help him navigate across the Atlantic. Direction was measured with a compass situated on deck.

PASS

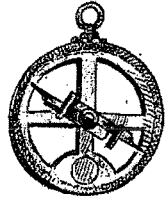


Pincers were used for marking off each day's

journey on a map. An astrolabe could be used to help show the ship's location by measuring the position in the sky of the sun and stars.



PINCER



ASTROLABE

What they brought back

The islanders gave Columbus and his men gifts of:

The sailors found strange animals:

IGUANAS



GIANT RODENTS CALLED HUTIAS



TROPICAL FISH



PARROTS



DARTS



COTTON THREAD

PUMPKINS



INDIAN CORN (MAIZE)



PINEAPPLES

The crew quickly copied the islanders' hammocks for sleeping on board ship.



The *Santa Maria* could carry about 100 tons. Her crew numbered 40 men.

mainmast

Food and other supplies were stored below deck.

foremast

bow

Unwanted passengers

All sailing ships had unwanted passengers:

FLEAS



WEEVILS



MAGGOTS

RATS

