



Teacher's Guide

The Discovery: Columbus & the New World **Drive Thru History/American History**

Grade Levels:

7-12

Subject Areas:

United States History

World History

Synopsis:

Dave investigates the “confluence of events” that resulted in Columbus’ discovery of America. In a broad sweep of history, he connects Marco Polo’s writings to Kublai Khan, to the siege of Constantinople, to the closure of the Silk Road, and finally to the need to discover new trade routes to India and China. Visiting key spots in this history, Dave recalls how Columbus’ decision to go West to find the East was an inspiration guided the suggestion of mathematician and navigator, Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli. At the Church of Saint George the Martyr in Palos, Spain, Dave tells how Father Perez represented Columbus at the court of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand and rescued Columbus at his lowest moment. In the final section, Dave explains how it came to be that the New World was named not after Columbus but after an explorer who came later, Amerigo Vespucci.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

- Describe the characteristics and education that suited Columbus to lead the expedition to the New World
- Describe the confluence of events that ultimately resulted in Columbus discovering America
- Explain why Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand supported Columbus

Vocabulary:

privateering, piazza, confluence of events, contiguous

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

In 1492, who left the small seaside town of Palos, Spain, on an expedition to find a trade route to India and China?

How successful was this Italian explorer? Did he ever find the trade route he sought?

What motivated Columbus to sail west to find the East? Why didn't he just sail east?

Who financed Columbus' three expeditions to the New World?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

What historical events made Spanish and Italian explorers anxious to find alternative trade routes to Indian and China?

Why was Columbus able to persevere for 20 years before he could make his journey? Who paved the way for him at the Spanish court? Why did Ferdinand and Isabella fund Columbus' journeys?

What are the origins of the name, "America"?

Further Activities:

Further investigate the discoveries made by Vespucci. Determine how native cultures in South America were forever changed because of his discoveries.

Find first-hand accounts of Christopher Columbus' treatment of native populations in the Bahamas.

Speculate on what might have happened if King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella had not supported Columbus and his expeditions to the New World.