

Columbus: Did it happen?

Essential Question: Did Columbus die still believing that he had reached Asia?

Instructions: Analyze the sources below. Answer the questions that go along with each on your own paper. After completing the questions answer the Essential Question above. Be sure to cite specific evidence from the documents in your final answer.

Textbook passage

In August 1492 Columbus set sail with 88 men and three small ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*. On October 12, 1492, he and his tired crew landed on a small island in the Bahamas. What was Columbus's mistake? He didn't realize another continent lay in front of him, and he believed he had reached Asia. At that time Europeans called Asia the Indies, so Columbus called the people who lived on the island Indians.

Columbus made three more journeys to America during his lifetime, never realizing that he had found a land unknown to Europeans. Columbus died still believing that he had reached Asia.

Source: A 2006 history textbook titled World History: Medieval to Early Modern Times, p. 449.

1. According to the textbook what did Columbus believe when he died?
2. Is this a reliable source for answering our essential question? Why or why not?
3. How could we find out if this source is accurate or not?

Document 1:

Letter by Columbus Letter from Christopher Columbus to the Governors of the Bank of St. George, Genoa. 1502.

Most Noble Lords: Although my body is here my heart is always near you. Our Lord has bestowed on [given] me the greatest favor which He has ever granted anyone except David. The results of my undertaking [actions] are already being seen, and would shine considerably if the darkness of the government did not conceal [hide] them. I shall go again to the Indies in the name of the Holy Trinity, and shall soon return. But as I am a mortal, I have ordered my son Don Diego to give you every year, forever, the tenth of all the revenue [money, income] obtained, in payment of the tax on wheat, wine and other provisions. If this tenth amounts to anything please take it. If not, take my will for my deed. I ask you as a favor to attend to [take care of] my said son Don Diego. Nicolas de Oderigo knows all about my letters of concessions [things given] and privileges [things owed], and I have asked him to take good care of them. I wish you would see them. The King and the Queen, my sovereigns, wish to honor me now more than ever. The Holy Trinity may keep [protect] your noble persons in its guard, and increase the importance of your magnificent office.

Dated at Seville, this 2nd of April, 1502.

The Great Admiral of the Ocean Sea, and Viceroy and Governor of the Islands and Mainland of Asia and the Indies belonging to the King and Queen, my sovereigns, their Captain General of the Sea, and a member of their Council,

Christopher Columbus

1. What is Columbus writing about or asking for in this letter?
2. Is this a reliable source for answering our essential question? Why or why not?
3. Official letters are often signed with a job title. For I might sign:

AVID Coordinator, Greatest Teacher Ever, Jurupa Middle School

Mr. Roughton

What does Columbus's job title on this letter tell you about what he thought about the lands he found?

Document 2:

Excerpts from Columbus' writings of his 3rd Voyage, 1500

From a Letter written by Columbus:

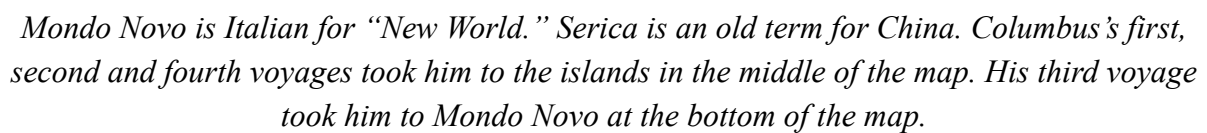
"I undertook [began/tried] another voyage to the new heavens and the new earth, which had been hidden hitherto [unknown up until now], and if these are not appreciated in Spain like the other parts of the Indies, it is not at all wonderful, since it is to my labors [hard work] that they are indebted for them.

From a paraphrase of commentary on the journal by Fiske, John in *Christopher Columbus: Extracts from Journal*, not directly from Columbus:

Certainly we found prizes, but not, sadly, a strait [water passage] from Cuba to India. We left from São Tiago Island in Cape Verde. Before venturing [going] further we stopped at Trinidad (named after the Holy Trinity, whose protection we had invoked for the voyage), and entered the Gulf of what the Indians called Paria. The great floods of fresh water flowing eastward into the Gulf showed we had found another world though we did not find the mines of King Solomon's gold.

1. Is this a reliable source for answering our essential question? Why or why not?
2. What does it mean if you describe something as new?
3. Where does Columbus say he was going on his third voyage?
4. What do you think Columbus meant by "new heavens and new earth?"
5. What other indications are there in this passage that Columbus might have believed he had found a new continent?

Part of a Map made by Columbus' brother, at Columbus' command, in 1503, after the 4th voyage



1. Is this a reliable source for answering our essential question? Why or why not?
2. A continent is a large and continuously connected area of land. Based on that definition, how many continents are shown on this map and what names are they given?
3. Today we know that “Mondo Novo” is actually South America. Look at the map on p. R-30 in the back of your textbook and compare it to this one. How accurate is Columbus’s map?

4. Does this map give any hint that Columbus knew he had found a new continent? Why or why not?