

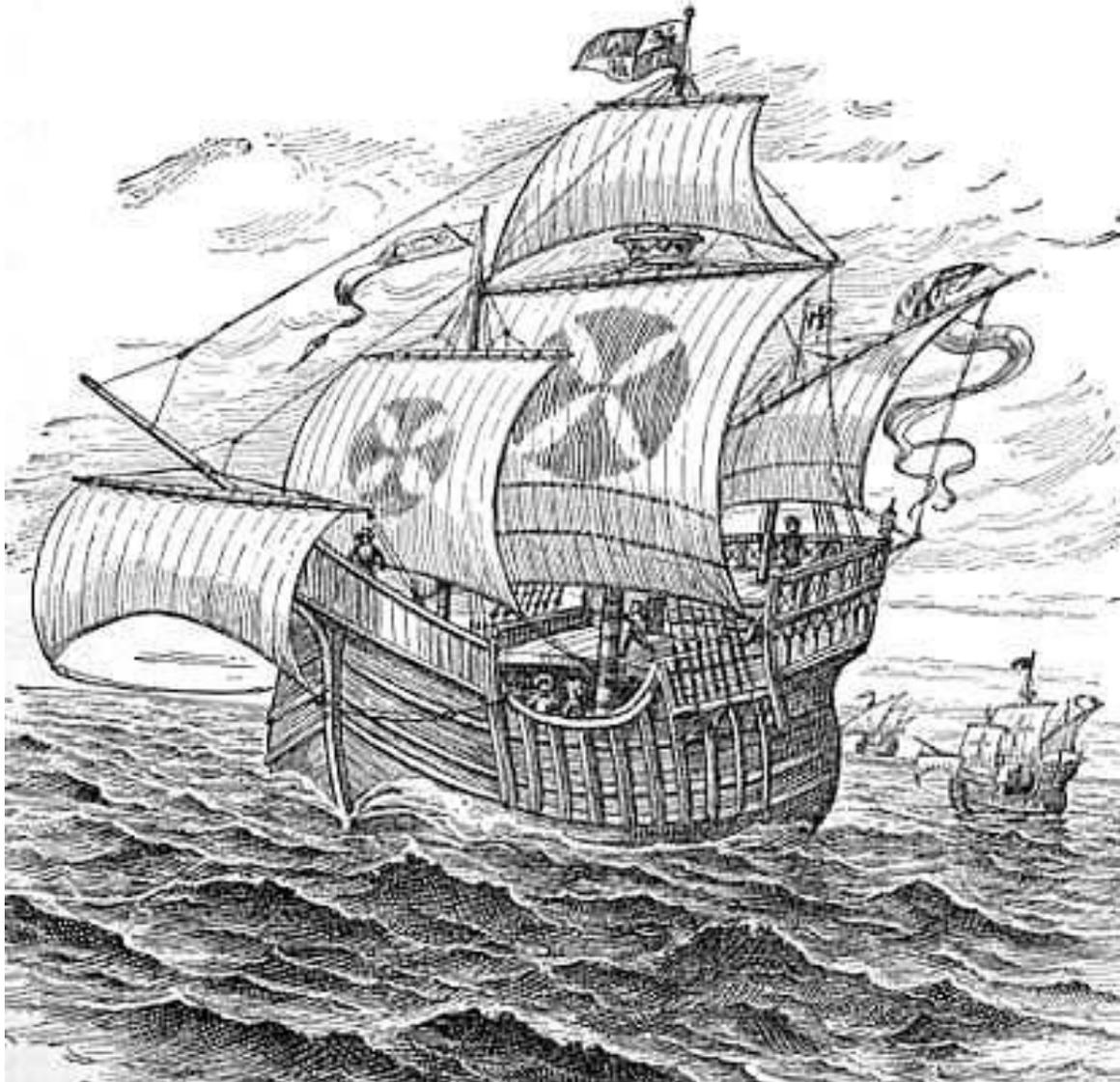
# The Story of Christopher Columbus



Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy in 1451. Living by the Mediterranean Sea, he longed to be a sailor. He began sailing on Italian ships at the age of 14. When Columbus was 25, he was sailing on a ship headed for England. A group of French pirates attacked his ship. Columbus was hurt, but managed to grab onto some floating wood and make his way to shore.

Columbus opened a shop that sold maps and books for sailors. There he became a map maker and began reading books. He read a book written by Marco Polo. Columbus was fascinated by Polo's book. After reading this book, Columbus was sure he could reach the Indies by traveling west. He wanted to go to the Indies to get jewels and spices.

Columbus asked King John II of Portugal for three ships to try out his idea of traveling west to reach the East. The king refused to give him the ships. Columbus tried going to other kings in France and England. They would not give him the ships. Finally Columbus went to the king and queen of Spain, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. He asked them for money to try out his idea of traveling west to reach the East. Queen Isabella refused Columbus at first. Later King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella gave Columbus three ships, a crew of about ninety men, and some money. The three ships were the Niña, Pinta, and Santa María.



On August 2, 1492, the voyage began. The trip was not easy. Columbus's crew was afraid of the unknown seas. They believed monsters were in the waters. Some thought the world was flat and that their ships were sailing too far from the shore and would fall off the end of the earth. On September 1, 1492, Columbus's ships passed an active volcano on the island of Tenerife. They also reported seeing a bolt of fire fall from the heavens into the sea. The men took these as bad signs.

On October 12, after 71 days at sea, land was sighted. Columbus and his men rowed ashore and planted a flag in the sand. They claimed the island, which they named San Salvador, for Spain. Since Columbus believed he was in the Indies, he called the natives Indians. Columbus had really landed on an island southeast of what is now Florida.

In March 1493, Columbus sailed back to Spain with a few Indians. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella named him Admiral of the Ocean Sea.

Columbus sailed to America three more times in 1493, 1498, and 1502. He found San Salvador and then Cuba which he called Juana, but he found few riches on his voyages. He died a man of average wealth on May 20, 1506 in Spain.

