

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

## Christopher Columbus (Introduction)

### 1492

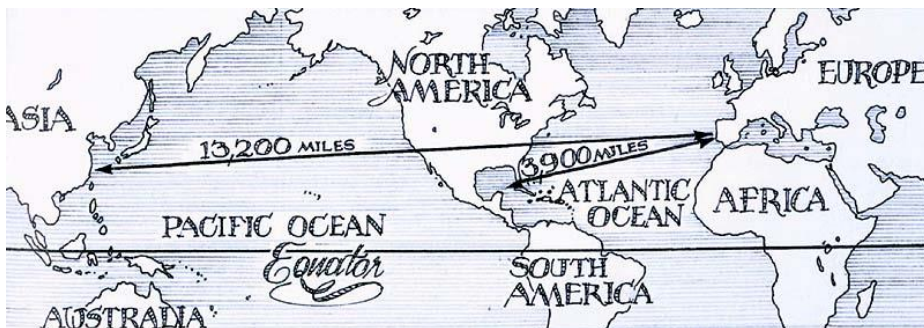
Before Columbus, people living in Europe knew nothing about North or South America. They didn't know that these two great continents even existed. For them, the world consisted only of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Likewise, the native peoples living in what today we call America knew nothing about the rest of the world. It was Columbus who first introduced these two separate 'worlds'—the *Old World* (Europe, Africa, Asia) and the *New World* (the Americas)—to one another.

Back in 1492, educated Europeans knew that the earth was spherical (shaped like a ball). But they didn't know its size; they thought that it was much smaller than it really is.

Columbus reasoned that since the earth was round (spherical), one could get to China (from Europe) by traveling in either direction, *east* or *west*. And he set out to prove that he could reach China by sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean.

According to Columbus's maps and calculations it was only 2,700 miles from Spain to India, China (Cathay) and the Spice Islands. →

If this were true, it would be much shorter to sail west across the Atlantic Ocean than to go by land or sail around Africa.



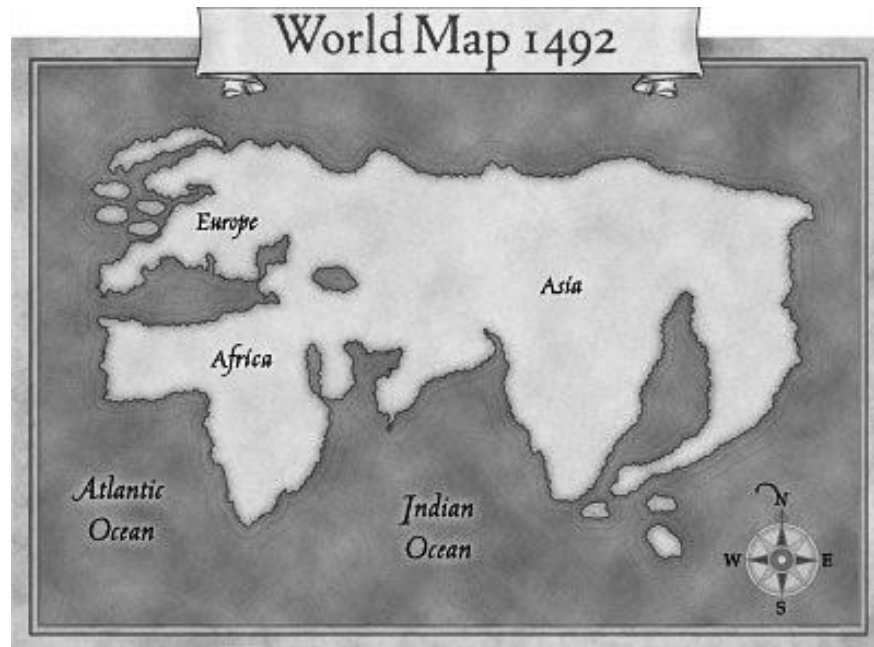
← This map shows the actual mileage between Europe and Asia (13,200 miles), and between Europe and the New World (3,900 miles).

As it turned out, Columbus never reached India, China (Cathay) or the Spice Islands. Instead, he discovered a whole 'new world' unknown to the Europeans of his day. But Columbus never realized this; he died believing that he'd been to Asia.

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## Maps of the Known World (1492)



Notice that North and South America are not pictured on the map of the world *above*. On the map *below*, China (Cathay) appears to be directly across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe, opposite Spain. European explorers had reached Asia by sailing around the tip of Africa and then heading east. But Columbus was the first to try reaching China by sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean.

