

Christopher Columbus Didn't Discover the New World; he Rediscovered it

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Level **560L**



Viking Leif Erikson discovers North America before Christopher Columbus. Photo from Wikimedia.

Christopher Columbus was an Italian explorer. In 1492, he set sail for Asia, but instead, he landed in the Caribbean islands. Columbus did not realize it, but he discovered the Americas by accident. The Americas are the continents of the Western Hemisphere. They are North America and South America. North America includes Central America, the Caribbean islands and Greenland. Europeans called them the "New World." They had no idea the Americas even existed.

The first Americans were the ancestors of Native Americans. They came thousands of years ago.

Europeans arrived much later. By that time, the Native Americans were already living all over the Americas. But Europeans called it the "New World."

Early European explorers

The Vikings were people from Denmark, Sweden and Norway. They were the first Europeans to land in the Americas. In 982, a Viking named Erik the Red began a colony in Greenland. Leif

Erikson was the son of Erik the Red. He probably reached the coast of Canada. There is evidence of Viking villages there from Leif's time.

The Vikings moved south. They reached a warmer land filled with woods. "Wine berries," or grapes, grew there. They named this place Vinland, meaning "Wine Land." Vinland may have been in Maryland or Virginia.

The Age of Discovery (or the Age of Exploration)

In the 1400s and 1500s, Europeans reached the Americas. This time period is called the Age of Discovery, or the Age of Exploration. Europeans sailed around the globe. They explored Africa and sent ships to India and Asia.

The Age of Discovery had a huge effect on the world. Different parts of the world became connected to each other. Europeans conquered many places and built large empires. In the Americas, they brought over diseases by accident. These diseases killed many Native Americans. Later, Europeans brought African slaves to work. They sent gold and silver from the Americas back to Europe. European countries became even richer.

Many crops came from the Americas, like potatoes, corn and chocolate. These foods now feed the world. Europeans brought horses, cattle and sheep to the Americas. They also brought wheat, rice, steel and guns.

Advances fostering exploration

Bigger ships that could handle ocean wind were built. Because they were bigger, they were able to hold more cargo. Ships were now able to sail across the ocean. Europeans made discoveries in astronomy. It is the science of the stars. These discoveries helped sailors steer their ships better.

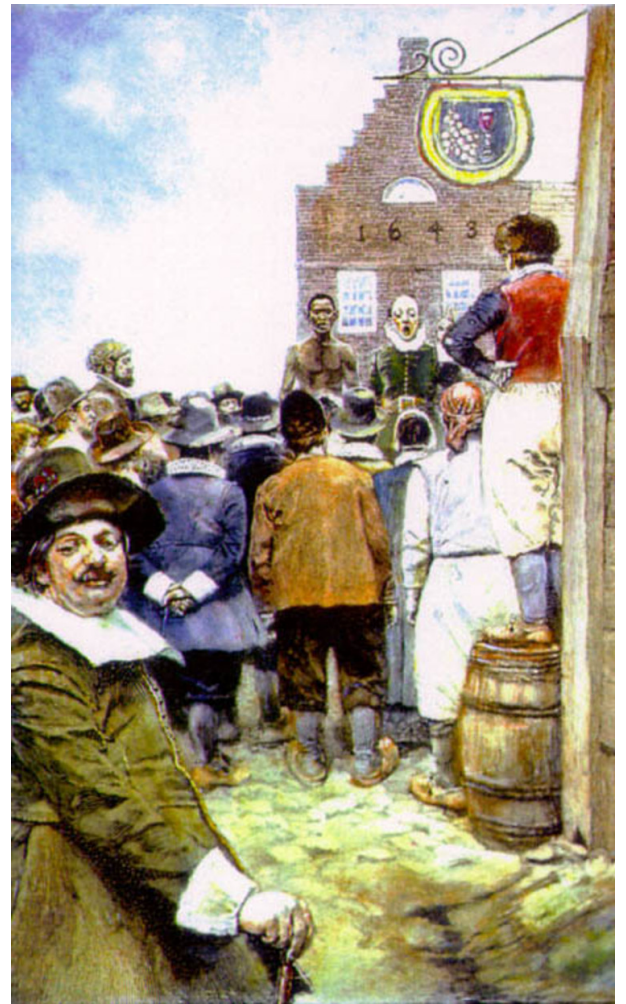
During this time, printing improved. Maps also became better. New instruments helped people observe the stars and navigate ships.

In the 1100s, the magnetic compass reached Europe. Also, navigators began using the cross-staff and the astrolabe. These tools helped to know how far north or south a ship was. This is called its latitude.

The desire for new trade routes

European explorers found the New World by mistake. They were looking for a sea route to Asia. Spices and silk came from Asia. They were expensive in Europe. Ships could carry them more cheaply. They hoped that finding a sea route to Asia would make bringing riches back easier.





Quiz

- 1 Look at the picture and its caption at the top of the article.
What information does this picture give you?
- (A) who discovered North America
 - (B) where North America is located
 - (C) what the Vikings are
 - (D) when Vikings sailed to North America
- 2 Look at the image in the section "Advances fostering exploration."
What does this image show?
- (A) an example of a magnetic compass
 - (B) an example of a better map
 - (C) an example of an astrolabe
 - (D) an example of astronomy
- 3 Read the section "The Age of Discovery (or the Age of Exploration)."
Which of the following explains what the Europeans took back to Europe from the Americas?
- (A) potatoes, corn and chocolate
 - (B) horses, cattle and sheep
 - (C) slaves and diseases
 - (D) steel and guns
- 4 Read the section "Early European explorers."
Which sentence shows that Vikings made it to the Americas?
- (A) The Vikings were people from Denmark, Sweden and Norway.
 - (B) In 982, a Viking named Erik the Red began a colony in Greenland.
 - (C) Leif Erikson was the son of Erik the Red.
 - (D) He probably reached the coast of Canada.