



COLUMBUS DAY

Columbus Day' is a national holiday in the United States of America. Find out more about this controversial day and try some of the (non-controversial) activities in your lesson (from A2.1 upwards).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Columbus Day remembers the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas on October 12 1492. Columbus, who was born near Genoa in what is now northern Italy, was funded on his voyage by the Spanish Catholic monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand. He set sail from Spain on August 3 1492 with three ships, the Santa Maria, the Santa Clara and the Pinta. His aim was to find the eastern passage to Asia and make himself and the Spanish monarchs very rich and powerful in the process. He arrived in what he thought was India just ten weeks later, but what was in fact an island of the Bahamas in the Caribbean sea. His voyage resulted in the first permanent contacts between the Americas and Europe and subsequently led to great exploration, colonization and exploitation.

Of all the public holidays in the USA, *Columbus Day* is the one which causes the most controversy. Some people claim that this celebration ignores the pain and suffering of the indigenous populations of the Caribbean and mainland North America. Many tribes were eradicated after the arrival of Europeans and some indigenous people were taken as slaves back to Spain. Opponents to *Columbus Day* claim it is a celebration of genocide. The second argument against the celebration is the strong Catholic element that it involves and it is felt that *Columbus Day* has been used to expand Catholic influence in the USA.

On the other hand, as Christopher Columbus was Italian, many Italian-Americans observe the day as a celebration of their heritage. Indeed, the first celebrations were organized by the Italian immigrants in 1866 in New York. Without a doubt, Columbus was a great maritime explorer, sailing into what were uncharted waters. So on *Columbus Day* his bravery and determination are honoured and his significant role in changing the face of America is recognized.

Today, the biggest *Columbus Day* parade is in New York and over 100 groups take part with more than 35,000 people marching – quite a celebration of Italian-American culture!

If you would like to know more about *Columbus Day*, then click here:

<http://www.theholidayzone.com/columbus/>

And if you would like to use *Columbus Day* in your lesson, we

- provide you with a suggestion for introducing the topic in class
- suggest three activities which you can do in your lesson from A2.1 upwards.

You'll find all this in the following **Teacher's notes** and on the **Worksheet**.

TEACHER'S NOTES

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC:

Remind students that there is a German national holiday on 3rd October, *Reunification Day*. And on the second Monday of October, the people in the USA have a national holiday, *Columbus Day*.

Ask students what they know about Columbus, who he was, why he should be remembered. Add any extra information from the *Columbus Day* Background information sheet and help students with any unknown vocabulary.

Write this rhyme on the board:

'In fourteen hundred and ninety-two,
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.'

Depending on how much time you'd like to spend on this topic you could choose one of the following **activities** or you could do all of them.

ACTIVITY 1 (10 + mins)

Read this text slowly and clearly to the students. Then distribute the Worksheet and ask students to complete their gap-fill text with the correct countries and country adjectives.

Christopher Columbus was **Italian**, but the **Spanish** King and Queen gave him the money and ships for his voyage. He left **Spain** in August 1492 and arrived in **the Bahamas** on 12th October. The people of the Caribbean islands were very friendly, but Columbus and his men were greedy and cruel. They killed many of the native people and stole their land. After Columbus, there were many more **Europeans** who sailed across the sea to America and many of them became rich.

Columbus Day is celebrated in the United States of America on the second Monday in October. Since 1866 *Columbus Day* has been an important day for **Italians** in America, because Columbus came from Genoa in **Italy**. There is a big procession in **New York** and it is a holiday across the **United States of America**.

Check the answers in class.

ACTIVITY 2 (10+ mins)

With the class, discuss the two comments on 'Columbus Day' on the Worksheet.

ACTIVITY 3 (5+ mins)

Write this list on the board:

radar | fridge | ropes | crew | compass | map | computer | water | cheese | salt | telephone

Ask students to look at the list of items found on a ship. Help with vocabulary, if necessary. Ask students: *Which were NOT on Columbus' ship?* Encourage them to give reasons why.

(Key: NOT on the ship: radar, fridge, computer, telephone)

WORKSHEET

ACTIVITY 1

Listen and complete the text with these words:

the Bahamas | Spanish | Italy | Europeans | Italians | United States of America | Italian | New York | Spain

Christopher Columbus was _____, but the _____ King and Queen gave him the money and ships for his voyage. He left _____ in August 1492 and arrived in _____ on 12th October. The people of the Caribbean islands were very friendly, but Columbus and his men were greedy and cruel. They killed many of the native people and stole their land. After Columbus, there were many more _____ who sailed across the sea to America and many of them became rich.

Columbus Day is celebrated in the United States of America on the second Monday in October. Since 1866 *Columbus Day* has been an important day for _____ in America, because Columbus came from Genoa in _____. There is a big procession in _____ and it is a holiday across the _____.

ACTIVITY 2

Read what two Americans say about *Columbus Day*:

1 'I think *Columbus Day* is a bad thing. Christopher Columbus was a cruel man who killed many native people in the Caribbean and in North America. He was not a hero. He killed many men, women and children and we should remember these people.'

2 'I'm an Italian-American – my great-grandparents left Sicily in 1900 and arrived in New York. *Columbus Day* is very important for me and my family. It is a very old holiday and, here in New York, it is the biggest Italian day in the year!'

What do you think? Is *Columbus Day* a good thing to celebrate?