

Illustrate a Big Book: Christopher Columbus Narrative: Early Years in Portugal

Individual students, small groups or class create big books that tell the story of Christopher Columbus. Students can use “The Untold Story” by Tina Thomas (RTC, p. 42) or the information from the Exploration Unit from the [GLAD website](#) included below. The unit was created by Patti Jenkins, Angela Kostamo, and Pat McGuire.

If using these two resources, students can cut the stories into strips, gluing each strip to the bottom of a piece of blank paper or tag board and then illustrate each page according to its events. Teacher could use both stories and have students compare and contrast them. “The Untold Story” is much more critical of the Columbus encounter than the other resource, so it would be a good chance for students to see how the same story from history can be interpreted in multiple ways.

Christopher Columbus Narrative - Early Years in Portugal

The narrative below was taken from the GLAD website and was originally created by Patty Jenkins, Angela Kostamo, and Pat McGuire in October of 2002.

My name is Christopher Columbus. I was born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451. My father was a weaver and a wool merchant. As a child, I wanted to sail. I had little formal education because my father was poor. He could not pay for my education. But I always read books about the ocean and stories about Marco Polo. He was my hero. Books were my best friends. I was a very skillful reader. I learned many interesting facts about the ocean from books. My favorite book was Marco Polo's The Description of the World.

PICTURE #1

When I was fifteen years old, I started sailing all around the Mediterranean Sea. I loved the ocean. I was also a very good navigator and an excellent mapmaker. The scientific name for mapmaker is cartographer. Do you know what a navigator is? When I was twenty-five years old, I moved to Portugal. I wanted to find out about the world and Portugal was the ideal place to be an explorer.

PICTURE #2

I settled in the Portuguese capital, Lisbon. Take a look at these pictures that your teacher is showing you. Do you like Lisbon? It is a very old city on the coast. From my house in Lisbon I could see the ocean and the sailors from many lands loading and unloading cargo from ships. I also could see slaves being unloaded from ships. Do you remember who started the European slave trade? The Portuguese saw nothing wrong in enslaving Africans.

PICTURE #3

I learned to find my way at sea using this magnetic compass and a map called a portolan, which was marked with criss-cross lines. Do you know that a compass has a magnetic needle that always points toward north?

PICTURE #4

From Portugal I sailed on trading voyages in the Atlantic Ocean to Africa. I loved sailing. I was a happy man at sea. From these voyages I learned about the winds and currents of the sea. I also learned about the gold mines in Africa. It was around this time that I realized how much money I could make exploring new lands. All I could think about was the gold mines I saw in Africa. Gold here, gold there, gold, gold everywhere! GOLD! GOLD! GOLD!

Picture #5

I knew that there were rich lands of gold on the other side of the Atlantic, and that it might be possible to reach them by sailing west. So, I began to work out a plan to sail west across the Atlantic Ocean and find the riches of the Indies. This was my great and only desire.

Picture #6

I studied geography books to find evidence that this voyage was possible. I kept Marco Polo's book beside me as I worked. However, I had a big problem. I did not have the money to make this voyage. I decided to find a royal sponsor. I thought that perhaps the King of Portugal would be interested in my plans. So, in 1484, I saw the Queen and explained my plan. Well, she did not believe me, and she turned me down. I did not give up! I needed to find another king that was willing to pay for my trip.

Picture #7

I presented my plan to the King and Queen of Spain. I wanted them to believe me so I showed the King my map of the Atlantic Ocean and I also read to them my favorite books on geography. Well, the King and Queen did not believe me! They thought my plan was foolish. I did not give up! For six years I tried to convince the Royals to help me out in my plans, but I was rejected again and again.

PICTURE #8

I was fed up! I packed my belongings and set off to France. I wanted to find another King in France. But before long, a miracle happened! A messenger caught up with me and told me that the Queen had changed her mind. I would sail to the Indies after all! And that's when my New World adventure began!

PICTURE # 9