

LESSON 1



Europeans Come To The Americas

Read Aloud

October 12, 1492. On this fall morning, three ships landed near a small island in the Western Hemisphere. The island was home to the Taino (Tí noh) people. Soon a sea captain named Christopher Columbus, who was sailing under the flag of Spain, waded ashore. No one knew that their meeting would change the world.

THE BIG PICTURE

As you have read, in the 1400s peoples explored new places. In the Western Hemisphere the Aztec were conquering other peoples in what is today Central America and Mexico. The Inca were building an empire in South America. In the Eastern Hemisphere, European explorers were searching for new routes to Asia. Sailors from China were exploring Africa's east coast. Africans were trading with people from Asia and Europe.

The people of one hemisphere hardly knew that there was another hemisphere. In about a.d. 1000, the Vikings, led by **Leif Ericson**, had come from northern Europe and started Vinland, in northeastern Canada. Vinland did not last and was forgotten.

Columbus met the Taino 492 years later. East and West have known each other ever since.

THE TAINO

You read that by 1492 many peoples were living in the Americas. The Taino lived on islands in the Atlantic Ocean. Find the Taino's islands on the map on this page.

On October 12, 1492, explorers from Spain arrived on one of the Taino's islands. Very little is known about the Taino. What we do know comes only from artifacts the Taino left behind. Their stories of that first meeting with Europeans died with them.

The Taino Language

Some Taino words have survived. By studying these words and artifacts they left, we can learn something about how the Taino lived.

One Taino word that we use in English is *canoe*. The Taino made sturdy boats by hollowing out tree trunks. They used the boats to fish, to trade with their neighbors, and sometimes to make war. Some Taino canoes could hold over 30

THE TAINO, About 1492



MAP WORK

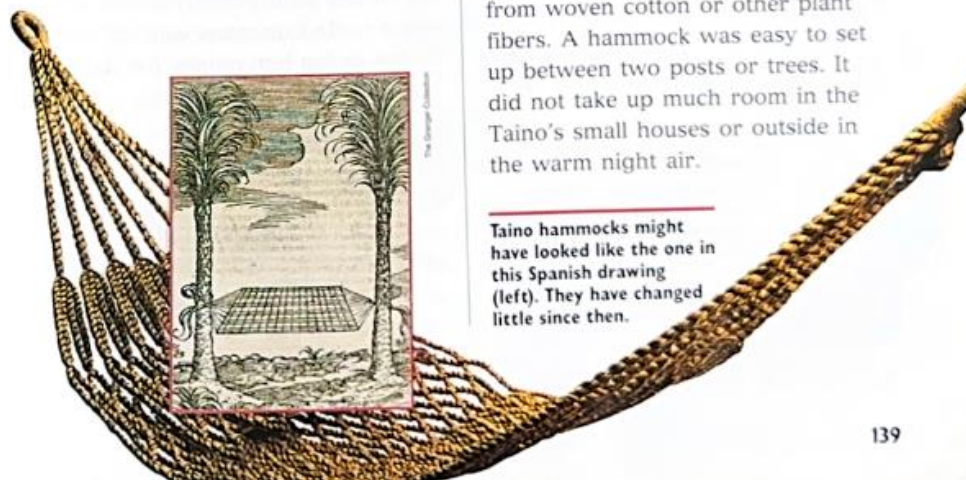
The Taino were one of the major peoples living on islands in the Caribbean Sea in 1492.

1. What are the islands where the Taino lived?
2. Between which continents were the Taino islands?

people and could travel for hundreds of miles over the open sea.

Another word from the Taino language is *hamaca*, or *hammock*. This simple bed was perfect for the Taino's tropical climate. It was made from woven cotton or other plant fibers. A hammock was easy to set up between two posts or trees. It did not take up much room in the Taino's small houses or outside in the warm night air.

Taino hammocks might have looked like the one in this Spanish drawing (left). They have changed little since then.



Focus Activity

READ TO LEARN

How did the meeting of Columbus and the Taino people change the world?

VOCABULARY

- expedition
- Columbian exchange
- colony

PEOPLE

- Leif Ericson
- Christopher Columbus
- King Ferdinand
- Queen Isabella

PLACES

- Bahama Islands
- San Salvador

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Although we do not know what the Taino thought about the strangers who arrived that October morning in 1492, we do know who the strangers were and where they came from. They had left Spain two months earlier in three small ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María*. This Spanish **expedition** was led by an Italian seaman who was named **Christopher Columbus**. An expedition is a journey made for a special purpose.

A Sea Route to the Indies

Columbus's purpose was to find a way to reach the Indies by sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean. Then the cost of trade with Asia would drop. If he was successful, the price of spices from Asia would become cheaper for people in Europe. Prices of silk, gold, and jewels would probably drop, too.

Links to MATHEMATICS

Columbus Miscalculates!

Why was Columbus wrong about where he was in 1492?

One reason is that he thought Asia lay about 3,000 miles (4,827 km) west of Europe. Use the scale of miles on the world map in your Atlas to figure out how great this distance actually is.

How much farther would Columbus have had to sail to reach Asia if he had not run into the Americas first?



This painting of Christopher Columbus was done in the early 1500s. No one really knows what he looked like because none of his portraits were painted during his lifetime.

Money for the Expedition

For years Columbus tried to raise money for an expedition across the Atlantic. The king of Portugal turned him down. He said that the distance to Asia sailing west was much greater than Columbus thought. **King Ferdinand** and **Queen Isabella** of Spain made Columbus wait six years before giving him money for the expedition.

Reaching the Americas

On August 3, 1492, Columbus sailed west into the unknown. Week after week dragged by with no sight of land. His men were afraid they would never see home again. To calm them Columbus kept two records. A ship's record is called a log. In the first he wrote the real

distance sailed each day. In the second he wrote a shorter distance. He showed his crew the second log so they would not know how far they really were from Spain.

Still the men worried. They demanded that he turn back. Columbus asked them to wait two more days. If no land was sighted by then, he would return to Spain.

It was just enough time. Early on October 12, 1492, a lookout shouted, "¡Tierra! ¡Tierra!" (Land! Land!). Ahead was a small island.

Columbus was certain that he was near the coast of Asia. Instead, they had sailed to the **Bahama Islands** off the coast of North America.

Columbus Describes the Meeting

The next morning Columbus went to the island. In his log he wrote that he named the island **San Salvador**, or Holy Savior, and claimed it for Spain. Read Columbus's description of his meeting with the Taino people. Believing he had reached the Indies, Columbus called the Taino "Indios." What opinions did Columbus have about them?

One of the tools Christopher Columbus used to guide him across the Atlantic Ocean was an **astrolabe** (above). It helped him to find his latitude and to sail a straight course. The hawks' bells that Columbus wrote about in his log looked like these (right).



MANY VOICES

PRIMARY SOURCE

Excerpt from
The Log of Christopher Columbus,
presented to Queen Isabella in 1493.

At dawn we saw . . . people, and I went ashore in the ship's boat. . . .

The people here call this island Guanahani (gwan uh HAHN ee) in their language, and their speech is very **fluent**, although I do not understand any of it. They are friendly . . . people who [carry no weapons] except for small spears, and they have no iron. I showed one my sword, and through **ignorance** he grabbed it by the blade and cut himself. Their spears are made of wood, to which they attach a fish tooth at one end, or some other sharp thing.

. . . They traded and gave everything they had with good will, but it seems to me that they have very little and are poor in everything. . . .

This afternoon the people . . . came swimming to our ships and in boats made from one log. They brought us parrots, balls of cotton thread, spears, and many other things. . . . For these items we traded them little glass beads and **hawks' bells**.

. . . They ought to make good and skilled servants, for they repeat very quickly whatever we say to them. . . . I will take six of them to Your Highnesses when I depart.

fluent: smooth and rapid
ignorance: not knowing
hawks' bells: small bells that are attached to the legs of a captive hawk

