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Activity Guide

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A Picture Book of Christopher Columbus

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ABOUT THE STORY

This biography gives young readers an understanding of the times in which Christopher Columbus lived, an introduction to the facts of Columbus's life, and an appreciation of Columbus's accomplishments and failures.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David A. Adler has become well respected through his many biographical works which introduce young readers to famous Americans. In his books, Adler emphasizes the triumphant success of the person in light of the challenges they faced during their lives. There are currently over 25 titles in his biographical series "A Picture Book of...", many of which are also available as Live Oak Media Readalongs. Mr. Adler lives in New York with his wife and children. He is the author of more than seventy books for young readers.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

John and Alexandra Wallner have illustrated the other books in the Picture Book biography series, as well as other books for children that they have also written.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Explain that Columbus's historic journey to America took place over 500 years ago. Ask the group what they already know about Columbus and why they think his voyage was so important. Explain that the book they will read will give them more information about this explorer.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "Why were people in Columbus's time eager to go to places like Africa, China, and Japan?"
- "Did most people in those days know that the earth was round?"
- Why didn't they (and Columbus) know about the size of the earth?"
- "Why were the sailors with Columbus frightened? Why did they want to turn back?"
- "Why did the Indians kill the men Columbus left behind?"
- "What do you think might have happened if Columbus had not made it to America?" (*Make predictions*)

Vocabulary

Duplicate and distribute the following list of geographical locations mentioned in the book. Review the pronunciation of each name and have the group locate each on a map or globe.

Mediterranean Sea	China	Italy	Japan
Genoa	India	Portugal	France
Lagos	England	Lisbon	Atlantic Ocean
Spain	East Indies	Valladolid	Hispaniola
Africa	Florida	Canary Island	

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Math: Measuring the Routes

Use a map or globe to show the different ways people in Europe could have used to get to the East Indies:

- Overland, following trade routes that ran east and south;
- By ship, sailing east around the Cape of Good Hope on the southern tip of Africa. Point out that the Suez Canal now eliminates the need to travel far.
- By ship, sailing west across the Atlantic. Only by sailing around the southern tip of South America could one get to the East Indies. Point out that the Panama Canal now eliminated the need to travel so far.

Ask the group: which way was the shortest? Which way was longest? Was Columbus actually right in this theory?

Science: Animals of the New World

Have children work in small groups to find out what animals Columbus might have seen on San Salvador and Hispaniola that he would not have in Europe. Ask them to write down at least three animals-birds, reptiles, mammals, fish, amphibians, or insects-that would have been new to Columbus.

Language Arts: Sailor's Journal

Ask children to imagine they are sailors on Columbus's first journey, sailing into the unknown. Have them write a journal entry describing how they feel about the voyage. Children can share their entries with the rest of the group when they are finished.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Other Early Explorers

Have children use one of these explorers' names as a keyword to find information on the Internet: *John Cabot; Henry Hudson; Jacques Cartier; Juan Ponce de Leon*. Ask them to find out the explorer's home country, where he went, and when he made his voyages. Children can report back to the class on the information they find.