

# Today Is Columbus Day | Lesson Plan

Why do we celebrate Columbus Day?

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Students will learn who Christopher Columbus was, understand the significance of his voyage, and recognize why we celebrate Columbus Day.

## Learning Objectives:

- Identify the names of the three ships (the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria) used by Christopher Columbus on his voyage and recognize the significance of the journey and exploration.
- Describe the concept of exploration and how Christopher Columbus's curiosity led him to explore new lands.
- Explain the traits of perseverance and hard work by discussing how Christopher Columbus faced challenges during his voyages and

## Key Vocabulary:

- **Exploration:** The action of traveling in or through unfamiliar territory to learn about it.
- **Perseverance:** Persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay.
- **Navigator:** A person who directs the route or course of a ship by using instruments.
- **Settlement:** A place where people establish a community.
- **Voyage:** A long journey involving travel by sea.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.SL.4

**Academic Topics:** America, U.S. Holidays, History

## What You'll Need

- Video: *Otto's Tales: Today Is Columbus Day with Michael Knowles* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Otto's Tales: Today Is Columbus Day* (Click [Here](#))
- (Optional) Book: *Otto's Tales: Today is Columbus Day* (Buy [Here](#))
- Map of the world or globe
- Images of the Pinta, Nina, and Santa Maria

## Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm-Up: (15 mins.)

1. Briefly introduce Columbus using images from the web or books. Explain that he was an explorer from Italy who sailed for Spain in 1492 to find a new way to India but discovered the Americas instead. Explain that in Columbus's day, there were no cars, planes, or trains. Exploring new places often meant extremely long journeys onboard a ship crossing vast oceans.



2. Teach students the chant, "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue."
3. Discuss the area that Columbus discovered by showing it on a map or globe. Show where he thought he was sailing to (India) and where he actually landed (the Caribbean).
4. Explain that Europeans had no idea that these lands existed, now known as the Americas (which consists of both North and South America and the surrounding islands), and that this discovery changed history.
5. Show the route Columbus took on the map. Point out the Atlantic Ocean that he crossed. Ask students to identify the ocean, its name, and the location of North and South America and the Caribbean Islands.
6. Teach the names of the three ships and have students repeat them. The Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria. Provide images of the three ships so that students can help identify them.
7. Explain that when Columbus landed, he met the indigenous people who already lived in the Americas. We call these people Native Americans today, but the reason they are often called Indians is because Columbus thought he landed in India.
8. Explain that Columbus Day is a holiday to remember Columbus's bravery and his discovery of the Americas. Mention that it is celebrated on the second Monday in October.

Watch and Discuss: (15 mins.)

1. Introduce the enduring question: *Why do we celebrate Columbus Day?*
  - o Ask students to think about this question as they watch the video.
2. Play the video *Otto's Tales: Today is Columbus Day with Michael Knowles*.
3. Pause the video as needed to check for understanding, especially of vocabulary terms.
4. After the video, review what the students have learned.
  - o Who was Christopher Columbus?
  - o What was his accomplishment?
  - o How was he able to complete his goal?
5. Revisit the enduring question and ask students for their opinions.

Wrap-Up: (15 mins.)

1. Distribute individual copies of the "Today Is Columbus Day Worksheet" and guide students through the following instructions:
  - o In the **Calendar Area**, have students write the name of the month and fill in the calendar by writing the numbers, starting from the correct day of the week. Remind students that October has 31 days.
  - o Next, ask students to draw a picture that represents something from the Columbus Day lesson (e.g., the three ships, Columbus, etc.).
  - o In the **Month Section**, direct students to read aloud or sing the months of the year song. Then, have them color in the correct month.
  - o In the **Seasons Section**, ask students to read aloud the four seasons, then color the appropriate season.

- In the **Weather Section**, instruct students to circle or color the character that correctly displays today's weather.
  - In the **Telling Time Section**, guide students to write the current time in both analog and digital formats.
  - In the **Temperature Section**, have students color today's temperature.
2. Conclude the lesson by revisiting the key concepts discussed. Reinforce the significance of Christopher Columbus's voyage by asking students to share one thing they learned about his journey or why Columbus Day is celebrated. Encourage them to reflect on the traits of perseverance and hard work that Columbus exhibited and how these qualities helped him overcome challenges during his exploration. End with a brief discussion on the importance of exploration and how it continues to shape the world today.

### **Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 mins.)**

Ask students to contemplate the enduring question: Why do we celebrate Columbus Day? Watch the video *Otto's Tales: Today is Columbus Day with Michael Knowles*. Distribute the worksheet and guide students through filling in the information.