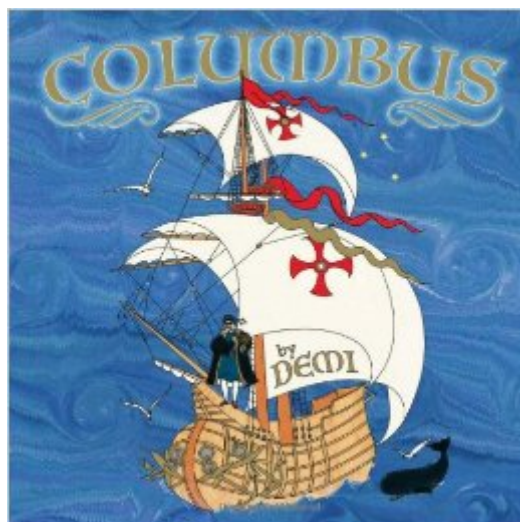


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# Columbus



## Synopsis

Born in 1451 in the seafaring nation of Genoa in northern Italy, Christopher Columbus grew up watching ships sail into the harbor loaded with riches from Egypt, Spain, England, and Belgium. Columbus was convinced that he could gain gold, silk, ivory, and much personal wealth for himself if he were to sail west from Europe to the East and trade with China and India. When Queen Isabella of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon finally provided him with three ships, a crew, and supplies for his journey, Columbus embarked on the first of four voyages to the East in 1492. Although he never reached Asia, he did land in Central and South America, establishing a firm foothold in America and opening up wider European exploration to the new continent and other foreign lands. Demi portrays Columbus as a great navigator and explorer, but she also provides a balanced view of his accomplishments, describing his enslavement of the native Taino Indians of Central America and his mismanagement of the colonies that he established in the Indies. Using Chinese paintbrushes and inks, gold overlays, and Italian marbled paper from Florence, Italy, she paints Columbus's vast world with characteristic skill and beauty.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1070 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 64 pages

Publisher: Two Lions (September 18, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0761461671

ISBN-13: 978-0761461678

Product Dimensions: 10 x 10.2 x 10.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars See all reviews (47 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #163,469 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #68 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Exploration & Discovery #343 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Historical

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5th - 8th

## Customer Reviews

Visually this book is wonderful. Quite striking, in fact. The text is decent, and does a good job of balancing the story in a short book for children. (The listed age group is 10 and up and, engaging as

the illustrations are, probably a bit heavy for younger children, say under 8.) The bad is there, Columbus's mistreatment of the natives and mismanagement of settlements; this is not a book with a happy ending. My quibble is an historical fudge. In discussing Columbus's requests to both Portugal and (what is now) Spain for support the author mentions the belief that the Earth was flat while also alluding to concerns that the Earth was too large to sail across the ocean. While there were people at the time who believed the Earth was flat (there are still a few today) it was widely known at the time that the Earth was round. But estimates of its size made the ocean too broad for the ships of the time to sail across it to Asia. Columbus believed, mistakenly, that the Earth was smaller. Had there not been a "new world" to "discover" he would have run out of supplies and been lost at sea. The naysayers were right in his case, and Columbus (and, ultimately, Spain) were lucky. While this is alluded to, I think the book would have been better if it had played it up and paid less attention to the flat Earth idea. Nonetheless, a lovely little book.

I really wanted to like this book. I love biographical picture books and I homeschool my two 7 year-old sons and wanted to have in my hand an excellent book about Christopher Columbus. I was so disappointed by the book the first time I read it I set it aside to read at a later date hoping my first judgment was wrong. Unfortunately I felt the same on the second reading. The book feels good to hold - large and thick (for a picture book)...solid. The illustrations receive rave reviews but for me they do not warrant that. Demi seems to have gone to quite an effort for the artwork - 'I prepared the artwork with Chinese paintbrushes and inks, gold overlays, and Italian marbled paper from Florence, Italy.' - but there are only a couple of images that I think are great and those are the ones before the story begins where the images bleed to the edges. Throughout the book the images are framed and always seem too small for the book. The gold leaf should be striking but it lacks shine so looks little more than a golden-brown color. (Compare that to *Marguerite Makes a Book* where the effect is superb!) As for the writing, I could not enjoy it. I felt much of it was choppy and it seemed many details were added simply because facts were known but they weren't explained to the reader or integral to the story: 'He correctly predicted storms and used the sounding line and the mariner's compass.' What does this mean to an average 10 year old? I see it as technical information given to be 'accurate' and yet what makes a \*story\* is the meaning behind this kind of information. What is she really trying to say...and why doesn't she just say it? She mentions Kublai Khan without any explanation. She calls Columbus' mistress 'a peasant and orphan' and I can't figure out why her being an orphan adds to the story. The last half of the book details return trips to the Americas and is difficult to follow, a bit boring even. Throughout the reading I wished for a map to see what part of

the world she was talking about, like exactly where was he when he `sailed all around the Mediterranean along the western coast of Africa'? She writes `...he would travel east by sailing west from Europe...' which is just plain confusing to a child without a map to talk it through. Finally there is a map on the last page showing different journeys but it comes too late and with no explanation. I will stick with D'Aulaire's book about Columbus when we study early American history next year.

This richly illustrated children's book tells the story of Christopher Columbus, beginning with his childhood in Genoa. It follows the navigator through several of his early voyages to England and Portugal, setting the stage for his lifelong passion to find a sea route to the Indies. The book chronicles both Columbus' triumphs and failures, creating a balanced portrait of a man whose voyages literally changed the world by introducing the Americas to Europe. Columbus is, of course, a controversial figure, and Demi does mention many of the criticisms against him. Accounts of his failed colonies and terrible treatment of the Taino are illustrated in a way that is safe for older children (splatters of red paint to indicate violence, for example) but still show that not everything he did was good. The illustrations are lovely ink drawings with Demi's trademark gold utilized throughout the book. She frequently uses the patterns on paper to great effect - for example, when ships are shown sailing over the ocean the waves are created not by drawings, but by the natural pattern created on marbled blue and green paper. The European costumes are accurately depicted; in some scenes, the embroidery on a shirt is reproduced through patterned paper while at other times Demi draws each individual stitches. The Natives of the Americas are shown naked, but without detail - their bodies are simply outlined washes of brown. It's a lavish, beautiful book that I would recommend for any child's collection - as I would recommend many of Demi's other lovely works.

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