









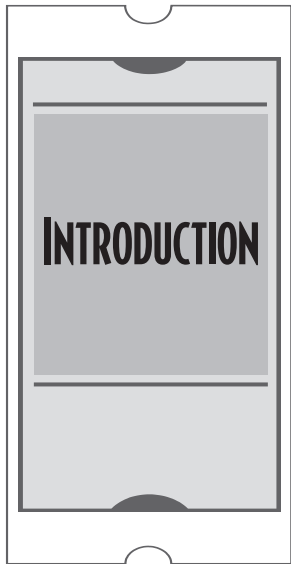


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 = total number of parts



Fluency instruction provides a bridge between being able to “read” a text and being able to understand it. Readers who decode word by word sound plodding and choppy. They are too busy figuring out the words to think about what they are reading. Fluent readers are accurate, quick, and able to read with expression. They make the reading sound interesting. Beyond the experience of the listener, fluent readers are also demonstrating skills that are crucial to their understanding of what they read. Fluent readers recognize words at a glance, group words into meaningful phrases, and move beyond the struggle to decode individual words. They are able to focus on making sense of what they read.

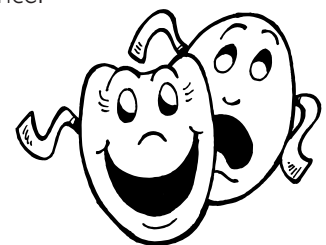
Reader’s Theater is an exciting way to help students improve reading fluency without being too time intensive for the teacher. It requires no props and no additional teaching skills on your part, and it is not difficult to manage. Reader’s Theater promotes better reading comprehension because students who have learned to read a passage expressively also come to better understand its meaning. In addition, research says that these gains transfer well to new text. Reader’s Theater also addresses standards in listening while providing a fun environment for everyone involved. When students practice their lines, they read and reread the same passages. Under your direction, they gradually add more expression, read more smoothly, and find any subtle meanings in the passages.

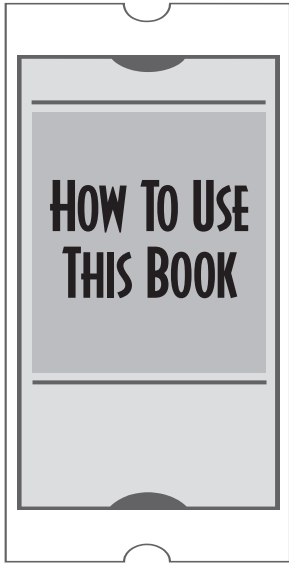
The scripts in *American History Reader’s Theater* are intended to be read in large groups of 6 to 13 students. Each script is prefaced by an activity that focuses on vocabulary from the script, the factual and fictional background of the piece, fluency instruction specific to that script, and comprehension questions that span the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Each script is followed by one or two whole-class activities related to the content of

the script. These scripts are designed for fluency instruction. While they are based on factual information about the time period or characters, many of the characters and scenes are entirely fictional. The overall purpose is to provide students with text at their reading level that is fun to read. The background section that precedes each script provides additional information about the characters or the period around which the script is built. All the scripts provide the following hallmarks of a good Reader’s Theater text:

- fast-moving dialogue
- action
- humor
- narrative parts

American History Reader’s Theater provides hours of fluency practice that is grounded in the familiar format of American history with characters students know and may even admire. The large-group format gives students an opportunity to work together to craft an entertaining reading for a peer or adult audience.





Each Reader's Theater script should be covered over the course of five practice days (although those days do not need to be consecutive). The first day should include some or all of the elements of the suggested reading instruction. It should also include an expressive reading by you of the script as students read along silently. On each of the following days, give students an opportunity to practice their reading. On the final day, have each group read its script for the class.

Five sections that support reading instruction precede each script. You will find **vocabulary, background information for the script, a brief description of each character, specific coaching for fluency instruction, and comprehension questions** that progress from the simplest level of understanding to the most complex.

On the first day of instruction, briefly discuss with students the vocabulary. Each vocabulary list includes a short activity to help students understand the meaning of each vocabulary word. For example, the vocabulary activity for *The Age of Exploration* (page 7) asks volunteers to pantomime the meaning of each word.

Next, use the background and information about each character to tell students what the script will be about and describe the characters.

Read aloud the script, modeling clear enunciation and a storyteller's voice. Do not be afraid to exaggerate your expression—it will hold the attention of your audience and stick more firmly in their minds when they attempt to mimic you later. Model the pacing you expect from them as they read.

Finish the reading instruction by discussing the fluency tips with students and having them answer the questions in the comprehension section.

Now it is time to give students a copy of the script! Use the following schedule of student practice for a five-day instruction period.

Day 1	After following the steps outlined on page 4, give each student a personal copy of the script. Pair students and have Partner A read all the parts on the first page, Partner B read all the parts on the second page, and so on.
Days 2 and 3	Assign students to a group. Give each group a script for each student, and have each student highlight a different part. Have students gather to read aloud the script as many times as time permits. Have them change roles with each reading by exchanging the highlighted scripts. Move from group to group, providing feedback and additional modeling as needed. At the <i>end</i> of day 3, assign roles or have students agree on a role to own.

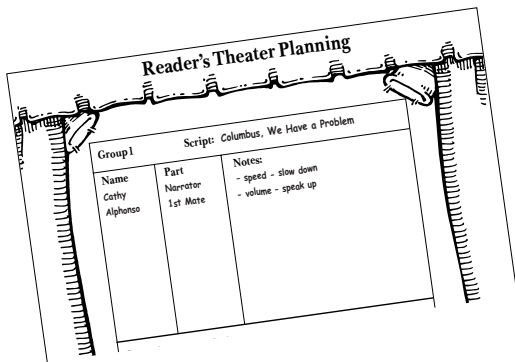
Day 4	Have each group read aloud the script. Move from group to group and provide feedback. Have students discuss their favorite lines at the end of each reading and why the manner in which they are read works well. Repeat.
Day 5	Have each group perform its script for the rest of the class (or other audience members provided by buddy classes and/or school personnel).

Throughout the week, or as time permits, provide students with the activity or activities that follow each script. These are optional and do not have to be completed to provide fluency instruction; however,

many provide students with additional background information that may help them better understand the characters or setting of the script.

Additional Tips

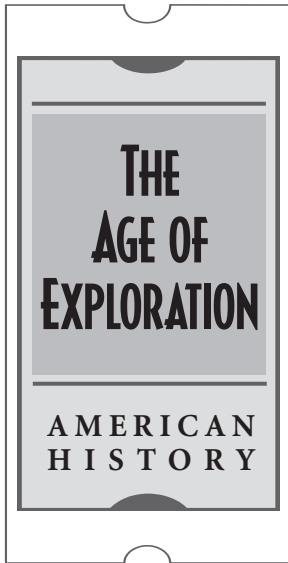
- Use the Reader's Theater Planning reproducible (page 6) to track the assigned roles for each group and to jot down any informal observations you make for assessment. Use these observations to drive future fluency instruction.
- Notice that there are no staging directions in the scripts. These plays are written to be read expressively in a storyteller's voice. If the focus is placed on *acting out* the script, students will shift their focus from the reading to the movement. If students become enchanted with a script and want to act it out, invite them to do so after they have mastered the reading. Then, have the group go through the script and brainstorm their own staging directions (e.g., page 54: *Ruth slaps Billy playfully on the arm*) to jot in the margins.



- To fit fluency instruction into an already full day of instruction, it will work best to have all groups work on the same script. This will permit you to complete the first day's activities as a whole class. Students will enjoy hearing how another child reads the same lines, and some mild competition to read expressively will only foster additional effort.
- If you have too many roles for the number of students in a group, assign one child more than one part.
- If you have too many students for parts, divide up the narrator parts. As a rule, these parts tend to have longer lines.
- The roles with the greatest and least number of words to read are noted in the teacher pages. The 🏠 and 🏡 indicate a higher or lower *word count*. They are not a reflection of reading level. The narrator parts usually reflect the highest reading level. However, less fluent readers may benefit from having fewer words to master. More advanced readers may benefit from the challenge of the greater word count.

Reader's Theater Planning

Group 1		
Script: _____		
Name	Part	Notes:
Group 2		
Script: _____		
Name	Part	Notes:
Group 3		
Script: _____		
Name	Part	Notes:



VOCABULARY

Discuss each of the following words with students. Then, have volunteers pantomime the meaning of each word in some way. (Students can point to the East Indies on a map.)

animatedly: in a lively manner

crow's nest: a place for a lookout to stand at the top of a mast so as to be able to see further along the horizon

destination: intended end of trip

East Indies: the western European name, during this period, for Eastern Asia

first mate: the second most important officer on a ship

suitable: right for a purpose




BACKGROUND

It is early morning and only a handful of the boat's crew are awake. Land was sighted the night before, shortly after midnight. On the captain's deck stand the captain, the first mate, and the navigator. They disagree over whether they have come to the place they are seeking—the East Indies. This script includes the following facts: land was sighted shortly after midnight, some members of the exploring party suspected almost immediately that they were not in the East Indies, Columbus never did believe that he had found an entirely new land mass, and it was the sight of the gold worn by the first natives that he met that motivated the other sailors to stay.

PARTS

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

 Columbus: 30-year-old
adventurer and sailor

Giovani: 40-year-old trader and
navigator

1st Mate: 25-year-old sailor

 Taino: 25-year-old native



FLUENCY INSTRUCTION

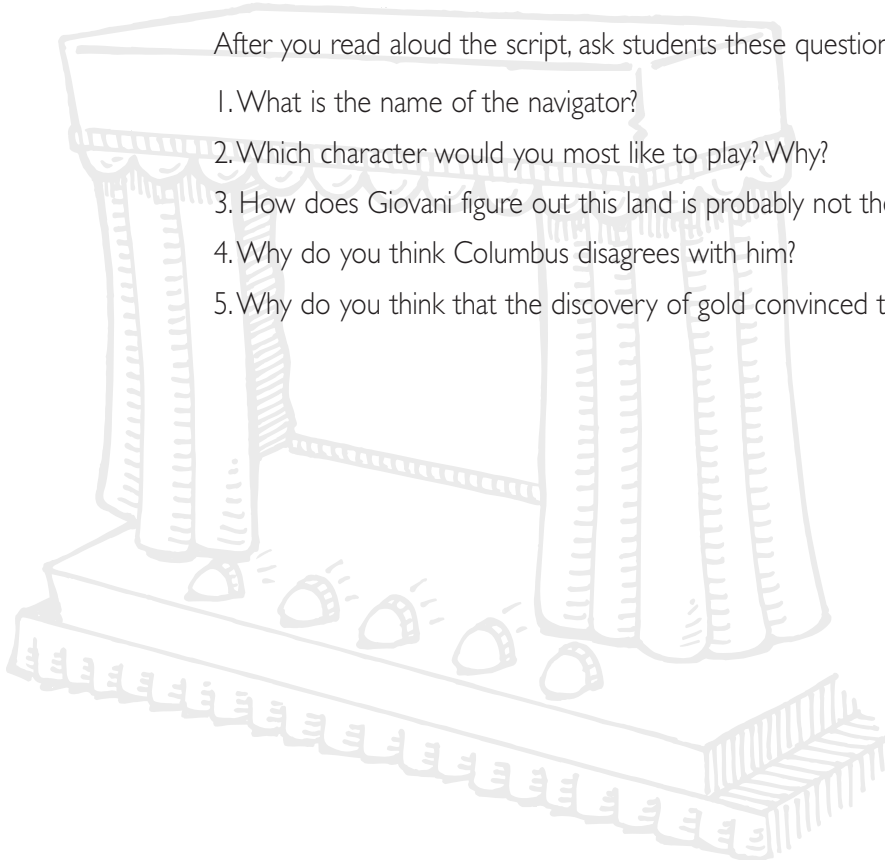
Have students discuss the ages of the characters to help them reflect the maturity level in their reading. When you read aloud the script for students, have them listen for the following:

- The pace of the reading speeds up when a character is excited. Have students name at least three places where the reading pace will pick up in this script.
 - The pace slows down when someone is angry but trying to be polite. Have students name two characters who are angry but polite at some point in the story.
- Your tone of voice is always respectful of the other two characters when you speak for the first mate.
 - Your voice rises at the end of a question, such as on the line
Columbus: Exactly how far?

COMPREHENSION

After you read aloud the script, ask students these questions:

1. What is the name of the navigator?
2. Which character would you most like to play? Why?
3. How does Giovani figure out this land is probably not the East Indies?
4. Why do you think Columbus disagrees with him?
5. Why do you think that the discovery of gold convinced the sailors to stay?





COLUMBUS, WE HAVE A PROBLEM



PARTS

Narrator 1
Narrator 2
Columbus: 30-year-old
adventurer and sailor
Giovani: 40-year-old trader and
navigator
1st Mate: 25-year-old sailor
Taino: 25-year-old native

Narrator 1: It is early morning and only a handful of the boat's crew are awake. The entire ship was up celebrating most of the night after the man in the crow's nest cried "Land ho!" shortly after midnight.

Narrator 2: On the Captain's deck stands an old trader and navigator of average size and a large, muscular man the crew calls First Mate. They are talking in low voices with an older man who holds a map. The man with the map is waving animatedly as he talks.

Giovani: The sky is wrong for the East Indies.

Columbus: Well, clearly, the map is wrong.

Giovani: No, sir. I drew it myself when I visited her coast as a young man.

Columbus: Perhaps the sky has changed!

Giovani: And with it, the land? Sir, I do not know how to tell you this, but this is not the East.

Columbus: I think you are wrong.

Giovani: It does not look at all like this, sir. It would not have changed this much in the ten years I have been gone.

Columbus: Perhaps it is some outer island. You would have sailed from the other direction! Perhaps you did not make it this far east.

Giovani: With an entirely different sky? We are still very, very far from our destination, sir.

Columbus: Exactly how far?

Giovani: See those stars on the horizon, sir?

Columbus: Yes, I see them.



COLUMBUS, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

Giovani: They should be more or less behind us.

[There is a moment of complete silence.]

Columbus: I have always had a lot of respect for you, Giovani. You know that.

Giovani: Yes.

Columbus: So you know I do not mean to insult you when I say I think you are wrong.

Giovani: Yes, I feel the same way.

Columbus: You feel what way?

Giovani: That I have much respect for you even though you are, in this case, wrong.

Columbus: I spent more than 15 years researching this trip, Giovani.

Giovani: I know you worked very hard to get to this place, sir.

Columbus: I have spoken with some of the most learned men of our time.

Giovani: You have lots of support from some very great men, sir.

Columbus: Surely the Queen and King would never have permitted me to come if they did not feel sure that I knew what I was doing.

Giovani: Actually, I think they just thought they did not have much to lose now that the primary trade route to the Indies has been closed. If we do make it, they will soon be rich.

Columbus: And WE shall be rich. I know we are not far! I can feel it! I can almost smell the spices on the air!

1st Mate: [sniffing] I do not think those are spices you are smelling. Someone just emptied the chamber pots.

Columbus: It was just a saying . . .

Giovani: But you admit some of those great men disagreed with you.

Columbus: They thought the Earth was bigger than I do.

Giovani: Perhaps it is! Perhaps we are only, about, oh, halfway there!

Columbus: I am not wrong! China is only on the other side of these islands!

Giovani: What if it is not?



COLUMBUS, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

- Columbus:** I will not discuss that! There is no sense talking about the ridiculous. How could there be an entire mass of land still undiscovered in these modern times?
- 1st Mate:** [coughs] It does not really matter as long as we can discover spices or new foods or...
- All:** Gold!
- 1st Mate:** Well, then, let us hope there are great riches here so the men do not mind that we are lost.
- Columbus:** We are not lost! Giovanni cannot remember his own mother's birthday. How can he remember the sky over China from ten years ago? This is probably an island south of Japan. We will do some trading here and then sail north a bit to find Japan.
- 1st Mate:** And from there China?
- Columbus:** Yes, from there China!
- Giovanni:** You are being incredibly stubborn!
- 1st Mate:** I wish I knew which of you was right!
- Columbus:** Look, they told us it would take up to a year to arrive in the Indies. I have led you safely here in only 36 days!
- Giovanni:** We did make excellent time to wherever we are.
- Columbus:** We have plenty of food and supplies left. We will take a few men ashore tomorrow and find some of the local people.
- 1st Mate:** Maybe they can tell us where we are!
- Giovanni:** If we can understand them. There are many, many different languages in the Indies.
- Columbus:** And many islands! You both are worried over nothing. I believe our fortunes are assured.
- 1st Mate:** What are your instructions for today?
- Columbus:** We will look for a good spot to land and pick a crew to go ashore. Judging from the sky, we will have excellent weather for the next few days.
- Narrator 1:** The crew find a suitable place to anchor and a small party of men head to shore in a smaller boat.
- Narrator 2:** They carry with them some swords, some small items for trade, and two flags to represent Spain. Curious islanders cautiously come out of their hiding places to greet the visitors.



COLUMBUS, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

Narrator 1: It soon becomes clear that the natives have never seen metal weapons like the ones the Spaniards are carrying.

1st Mate: Be careful!

Taino: Ouch!

1st Mate: Those are called swords. They are very, very sharp!

Columbus: Hey, look at that!

1st Mate: His shirt? It is a nice shirt!

Taino: Want to trade?

1st Mate: Sure! My shirt for your shirt?

Taino: When was the last time you washed your shirt? No, I want that cloth you are carrying instead.

1st Mate: Hmmm, nope. It is a flag. I need to stick it in the ground to claim this island for Queen Isabella.

Taino: For whom?

1st Mate: We can talk about that later. How about this rope?

Taino: Hmmm, strong, nicely wound, might be good for fishing. OK, my shirt for your rope.

1st Mate: Great!

Columbus: Ask him for his nose ring!

1st Mate: Oh, no. I do not believe in nose piercing.

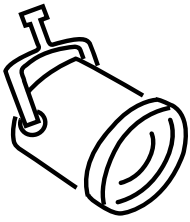
Columbus: It is not to wear! I want to see if it is gold!

1st Mate: Oooh! Hey, friend. How about this red cap for your nose thing?

Taino: Sure! Nice hat! Thanks!

Narrator 1: The island inhabitants wear gold jewelry in their ears and nose and around their neck and arms. The desired spices that Spain is searching for are nowhere to be seen, but there is strong evidence of an even greater resource.

Narrator 2: The explorers, motivated to continue by the sight of gold, are now eager to stay and learn more about the islands they have found.



RELATED LESSONS

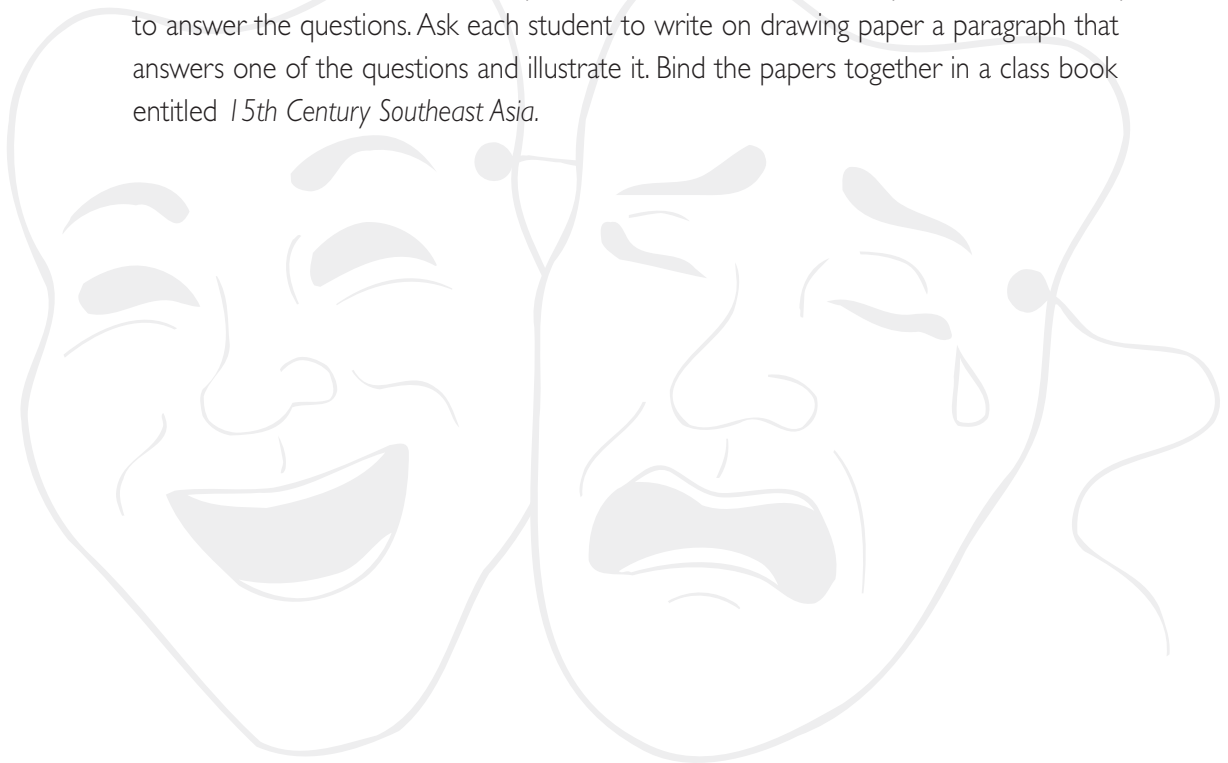
The East Indies

OBJECTIVE

- Illustrate and describe the importance of the East Indies to western Europe in the mid-1400s.

ACTIVITY

In advance, gather **research materials** about 15th century Europe, Africa, and Asia. Display a **world map**. Explain that the reason that people of western Europe, including the countries of England, Spain, France, and Portugal, wanted to find the East Indies was because it was a source of a very profitable trade for spices. Previous to this time in history, the trade routes were over land. However, religious and political wars had closed key cities on the way to the East Indies over land. The first country that could find a way to the East Indies over water could become very rich. Give each student a sheet of **drawing paper** and access to the research materials. Have the class generate a list of questions they have about the area and the time period. Then, have students find more information about the East Indies (southeastern Asia and its islands) in the 15th century to answer the questions. Ask each student to write on drawing paper a paragraph that answers one of the questions and illustrate it. Bind the papers together in a class book entitled *15th Century Southeast Asia*.





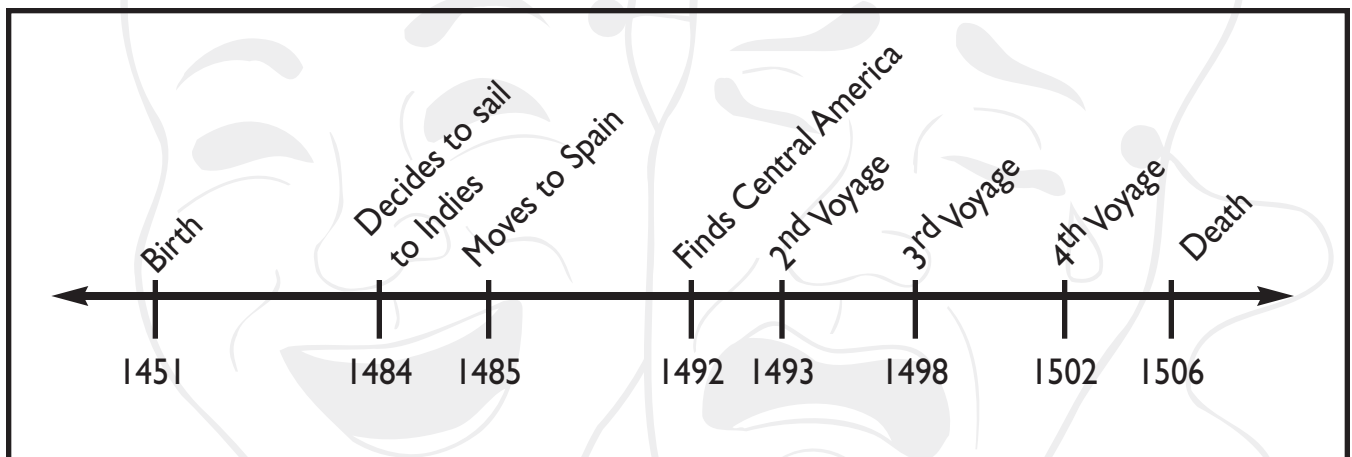
Columbus, the Man

OBJECTIVE

Learn more about Christopher Columbus and his life.

ACTIVITY

Divide the class into pairs of students, and give each pair a **1' x 3' (30.5 cm x 1 m) strip of butcher paper, a meter stick, and research books** such as an encyclopedia or children's magazine articles about Christopher Columbus. Give each pair a **Christopher Columbus reproducible (page 15)**, and have students research his life to complete the reproducible. Then, have students use the reproducible to create on the butcher paper a time line that shows the major events of his life. Have students use the space above or below the dates to illustrate each event. To extend the lesson, invite students who finish early to add additional dates for events in his life that are not on the reproducible but for which they discovered information in their research.



Names _____

Date _____



Christopher Columbus

Directions: Find the date for each of the following events in the life of Christopher Columbus. Then, on a long strip of paper, create an illustrated time line that shows each of these events.

Event	Date
Christopher Columbus' birth	
First decides to sail to the East Indies. Tries to convince King John of Portugal to back his plan	
Moves to Spain	
Sails for the East Indies and discovers Central America	
Sails for America the second time	
Sails for America the third time	
Sails for America the fourth time	
Christopher Columbus' death	