

VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS

Characters

Columbus

Queen Isabella

Felipe Hernandez

Narrator

King Ferdinand

Luis Gutierrez

Setting

This reader's theater takes place in the court of Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, aboard Columbus's flagship, Santa Maria, and in Cadiz, Spain. This story is based on actual events.



Columbus



Queen Isabella



Felipe Hernandez



King Ferdinand



Luis Gutierrez

Act 1

Narrator:

It has been a difficult time for Columbus. He has been trying to get a country to support his efforts to search for a new trade route to the Indies. The kings of France and England have turned him

down. King John II of Portugal has also said that the idea is a waste of money and that sailing west to get to the Indies is foolish. Even Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand denied Columbus. But, Columbus is very persistent, and he won't give up on his idea. He has again returned to the court of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to ask them to reconsider his request for money, ships, and men.

Columbus:

Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, it is a great honor that you have agreed to see me once again. With the Arabs closing the land routes in 1453, Europeans can no longer sail to the Indies for the needed spices. Spices are very important to us to preserve our foods. Going by water to reach the Indies is dangerous, but the spices and the jewels and other riches that can be had from the area are worth the risks. I'd like to try going in a different direction—west—to reach the Indies.



Ferdinand: Columbus, why have you waited for over a year to meet with us? As we have told you before, we don't want to support your idea of a westward voyage to the Indies.

Isabella: My King, let's hear what young Columbus has to say. He is a stubborn man who refuses to give up on his dream.



Columbus: Thank you, my Queen. As you know, my given name is Christopher, which means “Christ bearing.” As a Christian, my voyage would not be to just get spices and riches—I would spread God’s word to those I meet and claim the lands I find for your Christian Spain.

Isabella: Columbus, you must know that converting people to God is one of my most important missions. My religious beliefs are very important to me and I want to spread Christianity to everyone. Ferdinand, what do you think of giving Columbus a small amount of money and three small ships?

Ferdinand: Again, I think his ideas are foolish, but I will consent to your wishes.

Columbus: Your majesties, thank you very much. I will bring back many riches to Spain.

Narrator: Columbus is granted three ships and 90 men. The ships are small and not built to explore. Columbus’s crew includes some prisoners who will be given a chance for freedom if they agree to sail with him. Although most people believe the world is flat and that the ocean is full of sea monsters, the men agree to accompany Columbus on his voyage. Their dreams of becoming rich and famous make the trip worth the risks.

Voyages of Columbus

Columbus's Voyages Lesson Plan

Objectives

- **Fluency:** Students will deliver oral presentations and read passages fluently, focusing on the use of voice and tone as they read.
- **Content Area:** Students will discover the route taken by Christopher Columbus as he discovered the New World, as well as discuss the many things he found in the New World.

Summary

In *Voyages of Columbus*, 14-year-old Felipe leaves his hard life on the streets to sail on the *Santa Maria*, along with a prisoner named Luis. They take care of the cats, turn the hourglass, and see amazing “sea monsters.” When Felipe is given the helm of the *Santa Maria*, he crashes onto some reefs. Luis and Felipe tell the tales of their journeys with Columbus, “Admiral of the Ocean Sea.”



Materials

- *Voyages of Columbus* script booklets
- *Columbus's Voyages Character Masks* (pages 26–31 or Teacher Resource CD); copied on cardstock
- copies of *Take-Home Script: Voyages of Columbus* (Teacher Resource CD)
- PowerPoint® slide show (Teacher Resource CD)
- overhead transparencies of the poem and song (Teacher Resource CD)
- Performance CD and CD player or computer with a CD drive and speakers

Introduce the Literature

Have students read the story, *Where Do You Think You are Going, Christopher Columbus?* by Jean Fritz. After students have read the story, place them into six small groups. Assign each group one of the following topics: “Before His Adventure,” “During His Adventure,” or “After His Adventure.” Two groups will be assigned to each topic. Then, have the students pretend as if they are on the voyage with Christopher Columbus. Have them record five main events that either led up to his adventure, occurred during his adventure, or occurred after his adventure, depending on their assigned topics. Then, have the groups create collages that show these main events. Allow students to use magazines or clip art for their collages, as well as their own drawings. Hang the groups’ collages in chronological order around the room, to show the main events of Columbus’s voyage.



ELL Support

Help ELL students find the five main events for their assigned time periods. This way, they can focus on how they are going to present these main events in their collages, rather than focusing on actually finding the main events.

Involving All the Students

While this script has only six roles, there are many different ways you can involve all of your students. For this reader’s theater experience, assign those students who do not have speaking parts to create backdrops that can be used during the performance. The backdrops might include the three ships on which Columbus and his men sailed, pictures of the New World, or an ocean scene.

Reading the Script



1. Tell students to close their eyes as you read the following: “The waves crashed against the boat, causing it to bounce relentlessly in the ocean. At times, I feared we would never reach our destination. Was the possibility of fame and fortune worth the fear of the unknown? Could our captain lead us to our destination, or would we die never seeing land again?” Ask the students what images they got in their minds as you read the sentences. What historical event might this paragraph be describing? Allow the class to state possible answers. Explain that they will be reading a script about Christopher Columbus and his famous voyages to the New World.
2. Provide each student with a copy of the script. You can give the script booklets to small groups or you can print copies of the Take-Home Script. Play the professional recording as students follow along in their scripts. As you play the recording, ask students to pay attention to the different voices and expressions that the readers use as they perform the script.
3. After reading the script as a class, ask the students if there were any vocabulary words that they did not know. To help students learn the unknown words, have them find the definitions for those words in the glossary at the end of the script or by using dictionaries. Once they have found the meanings of the unknown words, ask them to pretend as if they are Christopher Columbus, trying to convince the King and Queen of Spain to finance his journey. How could he convince them that he should go? Have them write convincing arguments using at least four new vocabulary words from the script. Allow them to share their arguments with the class, or pretend as if you are the king/queen, and have them share their arguments with you.
4. Once students are familiar with the vocabulary words, show them the list of characters from the script. Then, divide the students into groups of five. Have each member of the group choose a different character, excluding the narrator. Then, have the students write journal entries, as if they are the character they chose. Their entries should describe their thoughts and feelings about their journey, based on the script. Have them share their journals with their groups, discussing the similarities and differences between the characters and what they wrote.



ELL Support

Allow the ELL students to work with higher-level students as they complete their journal entries and persuasive arguments. This way, they can get help if they are struggling with any words.



Voyages of Columbus

Columbus's Voyages Lesson Plan



Assigning Roles

Assign roles to students based on their reading proficiency. It is important to remember that when students practice fluency, they should read materials at or below their reading level. This helps them to focus on their accuracy, expression, and reading rate. If a student is reading text that is too difficult, his or her attention will focus on decoding words rather than reading with fluency. These are approximate reading levels for the roles in this script:

- ❖ Columbus: high 3rd grade
- ❖ Queen: low 4th grade
- ❖ Luis: high 4th grade
- ❖ Felipe: high 3rd grade
- ❖ King: low 4th grade
- ❖ Narrator: high 4th grade

Meeting the Fluency Objective

1. The fluency objective for this script focuses on using tone and voice while reading a passage. It might be helpful to do this lesson before reading the script, in order to model the use of voice when reading. To model tone and voice, read the following sentence aloud to students: *“I’ve never been on the sea before.”* First, read it in a monotone voice, showing little or no expression. Then, ask students how they could read the same sentence using an excited voice. Allow the class to practice saying *“I’ve never been on the sea before!”* in an excited voice. Ask them to do the same using quiet voices, frightened voices, and sad voices. Explain that voice is the way we say things to show our emotions, and the tone of our voices helps convey those emotions.
2. Then, ask the class which tone of voice might be most appropriate for the script they will be reading. Tell students that the use of tone helps others know how the characters are feeling, and it can add interest and variation to a story. In the script, there are times when Columbus and his crew show various emotions. When reading these sentences, it is especially important to use appropriate tone and voice because it helps convey the characters’ thoughts and feelings.
3. Place students into small groups. Have the groups find two to three examples of where particular voices and tone should be used. Have them read those examples aloud in the proper voice and tone. You may choose to assign each group a type of voice, or you may allow them to choose which type of voice they would like to convey to the class.
4. For further practice with tone and voice, write some sentences from the script on the board. Read the sentences aloud in a monotone voice. Ask students how they could improve on the tone and voice as they read. Allow various students to show the class the proper tone to use for the sentences. Also, discuss how to express surprise, anger, happiness, and other emotions that might be found in the script.
5. Explain to the students that it is important to be familiar with the lines of the script in order to read it smoothly and fluently. Point out that it is hard to add tone and expression when you are focusing on reading and comprehension. Allow the students to read the script once again, focusing on tone and voice.

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Foreword

By Dr. Timothy Rasinski
Kent State University

I am not ashamed to say that I am a reader’s theater nut! I really get pumped when I see kids perform scripts. I am equally excited to see the fire in teachers’ eyes when they begin to use reader’s theater with their students. Thus, it is no understatement to say that I am thrilled to see Teacher Created Materials publish this fine reader’s theater program. Let me explain why I am such an advocate for reader’s theater.

As someone who has studied reading fluency, I know that repeated reading is one of the best methods for developing students’ fluency in reading. However, it disturbs me greatly to see the manner in which students are often asked to engage in repeated reading. I see students do repeated reading with an aim at improving their reading speed—“Read this one more time to see if you increase your reading rate.” To me, this is not a terribly authentic way to engage in repeated readings. As a result of such a focus, I have seen many students develop the idea that repeated reading is done to make them faster readers and that reading fast is what reading is all about. Through such an approach, we run the risk of developing readers who sacrifice comprehension in order to read fast.

To do repeated reading appropriately, students need an authentic reason to repeatedly read or rehearse a text. I think the most natural reason to practice is performance. If you want students to engage in repeated readings, have them perform what they are practicing for an audience. With performance as a goal, students now have a natural reason to engage in repeated readings. Reader’s theater is a performance genre—it is a type of reading material meant to be performed. Moreover, because the focus of the practice is to convey a meaningful interpretation of the text to an audience, reader’s theater is also a natural vehicle for developing reading comprehension. I believe that reader’s theater is one of the best and most authentic ways to engage students enthusiastically in repeated reading to build reading fluency and improve overall reading performance.

My second reason for being a reader’s theater nut is easy to express—reader’s theater is fun! We all like to be a star at one time or another. Reader’s theater is a perfect vehicle for allowing students to become the star. I remember doing reader’s theater with the elementary and middle school students I taught. They could not get enough of it. They absolutely loved it. And, as their teacher, I loved it too. I loved to see students perform with their voices, watch their excitement, and enjoy their growth as successful readers.

Foreword *(cont.)*

By Dr. Timothy Rasinski
Kent State University

Moreover, through the opportunity to perform and see themselves as successful in reading, many of the struggling readers I worked with began to believe in themselves again. Many struggling readers give up on themselves as they are forced to plod through one unsuccessful reading experience after another. The enjoyment, success, and fulfillment that are part of reader's theater can help to break this cycle of despair and failure in reading for so many students who find learning to read difficult.

Third, reader's theater is a natural way to connect all areas of the school curriculum. Social studies, literature, science, art, and other curriculum areas can easily and effectively be explored through reader's theater. The scripts that are part of this program, in particular, have been developed to make those connections. Students can become so engaged in the process of rehearsal and performance that they may not even be aware that they are learning important content that goes beyond the reading experience!

I know reader's theater works. Nearly every teacher I have met who uses reader's theater on a regular basis feels that it is one of the best and most engaging ways to grow readers, and to instill in them a sense of reading success as they learn important content. I hope you will give reader's theater a try. I know you, too, will become a reader's theater nut!

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