

336. Christopher Columbus and the discovery of America


Things to think about - KS2 - PDFs only

Set Two - Things to Think About - 59 (A4) sheets.

low quality samples only


How did Columbus find his way?

Throughout history, many mariners have navigated their way across the sea using an instrument called an astrolabe.



Today, ships use modern navigation instruments which include satellites and radar and are much faster than Columbus' ships.

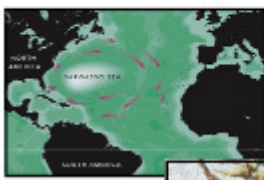
What would it have been like to cross the vast Atlantic Ocean?




Look on any map or globe and you will see that the Atlantic Ocean is vast. It is divided into the North Atlantic and South Atlantic.

What would it have been like to cross the vast Atlantic Ocean?

The Sargasso Sea



The Sargasso Sea is in the centre of the North Atlantic.

What would it have been like to cross the vast Atlantic Ocean?

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A hurricane passing over the Sargasso Sea.

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Columbus and the crew of his ships were astonished when they saw the surface of the ocean was covered by tangled mats of brown seaweed that stretched as far as the eye could see.

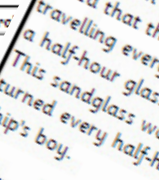
Its sinister appearance filled the superstitious sailors with terror. They thought they would become tangled in the weed then die of thirst and hunger in their trapped ships.

They didn't realise that it was the lack of wind that kept their ships trapped in the weed rather than the weed itself.





Air-filled bladders keep the weed afloat.

Columbus' crew would have helped him to estimate the speed that the ship was travelling every half hour. This sandglass would have been turned every half-hour by the ship's boy.



How far did Columbus travel on his first voyage and how long did it take?



To calculate Columbus' average speed in knots, you will have to divide the total distance by 24 since there are 24 hours in a day.

1 knot = 6080 feet or one nautical mile per hour
 A nautical or sea mile = 6080 feet
 A land mile = 5280 feet
 A league = 3 nautical miles

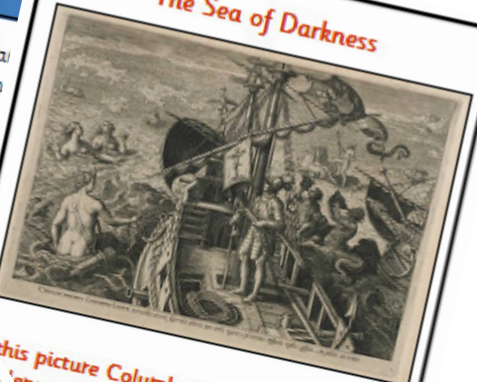
The Sea of Darkness




Columbus wasn't able to sail on the 6th or the 7th September because there wasn't enough wind to fill the sails so, we need to start calculating from the 8th.

He sailed about 2877.4 nautical miles between September 8th and September 13th. This is the same as 3313.37 land miles in 34 days. This is about 97.45 land miles a day or 164.5 nautical miles a day.

The Sea of Darkness



In this picture Columbus is surrounded by sea monsters. Columbus is standing on the deck of the armour-plated ship. He has been taken to Christianity when he was a child.

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The weed supports a number of creatures including sargassum sea-slugs and the sargassum fish.



Crabs also live on the weed so, it's easy to understand why Columbus saw the weed as a sign of land.




Well camouflaged slug, fish and crab.



A CRAB IN THE KINGDOM OF SARGASSO WEED.