

American History in Picture Books

By Cindi Allison

Unit 1 – Discovery and Exploration

I started this study with four of my six boys the year after we brought our 16-year-old home from Ukraine. I wanted to introduce American History in a way that would be easier for him to understand, but it has also been a fun way to teach history to my other children, ages 11, 8, and 6.

Who Was First? Discovering the Americas

By Russell Freedman

This book provides an overview of different groups and civilizations that came to America, but it is probably better for upper elementary and older. Some of the vocabulary is a little difficult for younger students. Also, it is written from a secular perspective, with references to carbon dating and events that occurred 20,000 to 30,000 years ago. We used chapters 1-4 and skimmed through some sections, reading a chapter each day.

Chapter 1

1. Find the definitions to these words:

admiral	caravel	credential	mutiny
monarch	maritime	paunch	javelin
emissary	astrolabe		

2. Why did the crew become restless and fearful? How would you feel in a similar situation?
3. Plan a menu based on the food eaten aboard ship. (www.christopher-columbus.eu/food.htm)
4. List the voyages of Columbus, including year and number of ships and sailors.
5. Plot the first voyage of Columbus on a world map or globe.
6. How did greed contribute to the trouble on Hispaniola?
7. What Taino words do we use today?

Chapter 2

1. Find the definitions to these words:

armada	incendiary	ideogram	maneuverable
cartography	stern	inscription	

2. Measure approximately 400 feet outside to more easily envision the possible size of one of the ships.
3. Read about the care and training of carrier pigeons: <http://animals.mom.me/train-homing-pigeon-carry-message-10844.html>. Discuss how this could be used aboard ship.

4. Sinbad the Sailor legends: http://www.momjunction.com/articles/sinbad-the-sailor-story-for-your-kids_0098548/#gref. This is a very simple summary of the seven voyages of Sinbad the Sailor. Discuss how stories can be embellished and changed over time.

Chapter 3

1. Find the definitions to these words:

embellish fjord auk monastery
whetstone

2. Find Norway, Denmark, and Sweden on the globe. Trace the path of the Viking raids across Europe, North Africa, and Russia.

3. What kind of supporting evidence has been found that the Vikings came to North America?

4. Looking at a map or globe, do you find it easy to believe that the Vikings came to North America?

5. Take a look at Viking longhouses: http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/daily_living/text/longhouse.htm. Draw a plan of your own Viking longhouse.

Chapter 4

1. Find the definitions to these words:

alliance referendum aqueduct consensus
metropolis

2. Describe the American Indians, based on how Columbus saw them. What did they look like? How did they dress? What were their habits? Homes?

3. Think about the crops grown by Native Americans that were previously unknown to the Europeans. What foods would you miss the most if we didn't have those foods today?

4. What do you consider some important achievements of the Native Americans?

Leif the Lucky

By Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire

1. The authors use descriptive language. Talk about simile and personification and find examples. Discuss how these elements benefit the story.

2. Talk about the Northern Lights. Look for pictures and videos online. One example is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVsONlc3OUY>. Make up a story about what you imagine you see in the lights.

3. How did the harsh conditions of Leif's environment help to shape Leif's strengths and character? Imagine how he would have been different if he had grown up in a different place.

4. How did Leif's trip to Norway change him?

5. Describe Vinland.

6. Describe the different lands the Vikings found.

7. Explain why the Norseman decided to leave Vinland.

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Follow the Dream - The Story of Christopher Columbus

By Peter Sis

1. How does the location of Columbus' birthplace influence his dreams?
2. What does Columbus have to learn before he can achieve his goals?
3. What are your goals and dreams? What do you have to learn and do before you can reach them?
4. Why was the crew uneasy?
5. What did Columbus do when he landed on the beach?
6. Use a blindfold and take turns guiding each other around the house or yard to get a sense of how it could feel to sail into the unknown without control.

Where Do You Think You're Going, Christopher Columbus?

By Jean Fritz

1. Why did overland travel to the Indies end? (Use notes at the end of the book for a reference.)
2. What kind of reasons did people give for not sailing west to the Indies?
3. What was Bartholomew Diaz' achievement, and why was it important?
4. What does *Adelante!* mean?
5. Why was finding gold so important?
6. Imagine the two options of Columbus' crew: staying in an unknown land or sailing back home through unknown conditions. Which would you have chosen?
7. What happened when Columbus returned to Spain?
8. Name other famous explorers from Columbus' time?
9. The spice trade was one important reason the Europeans wanted a route to the Indies. Some of the desired spices included cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg. Smell each spice, and compare. Try this recipe for spice cake: <http://www.food.com/recipe/old-fashioned-spice-cake-41292>.

Columbus

Ingri and Edgar D'Aulaire

1. Think about young Columbus' findings with an orange. Use a ball to try a similar experiment. Holding the ball with one hand, slowly circle over the top of the ball with another small object (we used an animal figurine). Notice how the top of the object remains in view longer than the rest of it.
2. What do you think it means when Columbus is referred to as a "captain with bone in his nose?"

3. Based on this book, how would you define the word “cloister?”
4. What were some of the hardships and troubles of the first voyage? The second voyage? The third? The fourth?
5. Describe what happened with Columbus and the basket of eggs? What do you think about this last statement?

In 1492

Jean Marzollo

This is a short and easy picture book. I used it to reinforce the main points of Columbus' story.

1. What year did Columbus leave on his voyage?
2. From what country did he sail?
3. What was the date they spotted land?
4. Try to build a boat that floats. For more fun, make three and sail them across the bathtub.
<http://www.origami-instructions.com/origami-boat.html>

Encounter

Jane Yolen

This story is told from the perspective of a young Native boy.

1. How did the Spanish explorers seem different to the boy?
2. Why does the boy continue to caution his elders not to welcome the strangers?
3. What is a zemi?
4. Many of the Spanish explorers allowed their desire for gold and riches to overrule their consciences. Discuss times when we may allow this to happen.

The Discovery of the Americas

Betsy and Giulio Maestro

This book includes some references to things that may have happened many thousands of years before. We teach from a young-earth standpoint, so we had some discussion about this.

1. There are stories and legends of different people groups that sailed to America before Columbus. Name some.
2. Name three of the major civilizations in the Americas that thrived before Columbus came.
3. What were the accomplishments of Bartolomeu Dias and Vasco da Gama?
4. What was important about John Cabot's journey?
5. Why was the new continent named America?
6. Who was the first European to sight the Pacific Ocean from the American shore?
7. Use a globe to trace the journey of Ferdinand Magellan and his crew.
8. Compose short poems to remember the explorers. For example:

Ferdinand Magellan
So hungry for a melon,

Sailed around the world,
Got killed in a battle,
And that is all I'm tellin.'

Exploration and Conquest: the Americas After Columbus: 1500-1620

Betsy and Giulio Maestro

This book describes the relations between the Europeans and Natives. Some depict battles and death. I used the opportunity to discuss our sinful world and how many people hurt each other, but some parents may want to preview.

1. Describe the agreement between Spain and Portugal in 1494.
2. List the Spanish explorations, which people groups were conquered, and what the explorers discovered.
3. Where did the Spanish establish permanent settlements? Why did they lose interest in North America?
4. What other "riches" did the explorers start to discover in North America?
5. How did the slave trade begin in the Americas?
6. Where were the first English settlements in the Americas? The first French settlements? Dutch?
7. It can be easy to "pick a side" in any conflict. Instead, take turns looking at this situation from at least two different perspectives: one of the Native people groups, a European explorer, soldier, priest, or settler. What could they have been thinking and feeling?