

Pedro's Journal

Pedro's Journal, by Pam Conrad, tells the tale of Pedro de Salcedo, a ship's boy aboard the Santa Maria, who accompanies Christopher Columbus on the journey to find the new world. Pedro's story is told in journal entries about the trip across the Atlantic and the exploration of the Indies. Pedro sees Columbus as egotistical and hot-tempered. He describes the native people as peaceful and unfairly terrorized by the Spanish. This book is appealing for reluctant readers because the characters, historical details, and plot are written in simple language.

Enrichment Activities

Exploring Genre This book is a good example of the genre Historical Fiction. Set in the period of 1492-1493 during the actual voyage of Columbus to the New World, it weaves a fictional story around historical fact and research. The author's note at the end of the book acts as a disclaimer for absolute accuracy, as her purpose was to create fiction, but the book can serve as an excellent vehicle for exploring facts from the time period. Before students begin reading the book, make a big chart on a bulletin board with the following categories: observations, questions, fact, fiction. As students read, ask them to jot down interesting observations from the story onto sticky notes. Place the sticky notes under the observation category. Ask students to formulate a question for each observation they make and then do research to determine whether the observation is fact or fiction and why.

Observation	Question	Fact	Fiction
Columbus is mean to people on the ship.	Was Columbus an egotistical, unpleasant person?	In fact, Columbus was a very egotistical and ill-tempered person.	
Pedro is a ship's boy on the Santa Maria	Was there really a ship's boy named Pedro who acted as Columbus' confidant?		It is unlikely that Columbus would have confided in someone with such a low status on the ship.

A Sea of Words This book is loaded with nautical terms. Be a word detective and make a list of the nautical words used to describe and name ship parts and crew. Try to determine what the word means from the context of the story. If you don't know what the word means, check it out in a dictionary. Use your list of words to create a word search or crossword puzzle for your classmates. Here are a few to get you started: captain, dock, fleet, ship's boy, dinghy.

The Pedro Times Imagine that you are Pedro de Salcedo just returned from your seven month voyage. Write an article for the local newspaper, giving a first hand account of

some of your adventures. Include a drawing or two of the strange things you saw on the voyage to the New World.

A Different Point of View Imagine that you are one of the native people that Columbus meets on the islands. Write an account of how the native person would view Columbus and his men and ships. Use information from the book to support the native point of view.

More Reading Read Jane Yolen's *Encounter*, a fictionalized account of Columbus's meeting with the Taino people, written from the perspective of a Taino child. Or your students may read *Morning Girl* by Michael Dorris, which deals with the Taino people immediately before Columbus lands on their island. Used together, *Pedro's Journal*, *Morning Girl*, and *Encounter* may raise questions about the treatment of indigenous people and how their lives were changed following their "discovery." Explore some of the questions and issues of exploration and exploitation. Do the authors of these books have different points of view?

21st Century Explorers What are the new worlds left to be explored today? Columbus sailed, at great risk, into the unknown to find fame and fortune. If Columbus lived today, what might he be doing? Ask your students, if given the chance to be "Ship's Boy" on an exploration into space, would they go? Why or why not?

Models Build a model of one of Columbus's sailing ships or make a drawing of one. Do some research to find out the actual size and dimensions of the ship.

Internet Resources

Christopher Columbus: Man and Myth

Grade Levels: **Intermediate, Middle, Secondary**

This article about Columbus contains some enlightening details that contradict many of the myths usually told about his motives and conduct on his famous journey. This is connected to other articles in the series *Inventing America* that also have interesting background information about the creation of America.

<http://metalab.unc.edu/expo/1492.exhibit/c-Columbus/columbus.html>

Christopher Columbus: A Culinary History

Grade Levels: **Intermediate, Middle, Secondary**

What did the sailors eat on Columbus' many voyages? This article describes how the fare included wine, olive oil, dried legumes, fish, and various fruits and vegetables from ports at which the ships stopped.

http://www.castellobanfi.com/features/story_3.html

Medieval Sourcebook: Christopher Columbus, Extract from Journal

Grade Levels: **Intermediate, Middle, Secondary**

These actual excerpts from the journal of Christopher Columbus provide first hand accounts of the voyage of the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria . The language may be a challenge for some middle school students but it is well worth deciphering.

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus1.html>

Columbus Mythbusters

Grade Levels: **Intermediate, Middle, Secondary**

A list comparing the myths about Columbus with the facts behind them.

<http://marauder.millersv.edu/~columbus/data/art/LAUFER02.ART>

Books by Pam Conrad

Call Me Ahnighito

Publisher: HarperCollins Juvenile Books.

Grade Levels: **Pre-K, Primary**

This picture book is the unusual story of a meteorite which is taken from Greenland and transported to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

Blue Willow

Publisher: Philomel Books.

Grade Levels: **Pre-K, Primary**

This Asian fairy tale tells the sad story of Kung Shi Fair, her domineering father, and Chang the Good.

The Tub People's Christmas

Publisher: HarperCollins Juvenile Books.

Grade Levels: **Pre-K, Primary**

The third installment in the Tub People series finds the wooden toys confused by Santa's arrival on Christmas Eve and their new status as Christmas tree ornaments.

My Daniel

Publisher: HarperCollins Juvenile Books.

Grade Levels: **Intermediate, Middle**

Prairie girl, Julia Creath, tells this tale about her brother Daniel's hunt for dinosaur remains in Nebraska before the turn of the century.