

The mysterious origin of Columbus
A certain Christopher Columbus, discoverer
A review of the different hypotheses about the probable origin of Christopher Columbus, by Luis Arranz

Here is an animation based on an article by Luis Arranz "a Certain Christopher Columbus, discoverer", published in The Adventure of History, (year 8 n°91). You can get the animation text [here](#). Next we propose some activities to be done.

Video: <https://vimeo.com/80841266>

Tasks:

1 Christopher Columbus' origin, an "old" or "new" discussion?

- a. Put in chronological order the different versions of Columbus' origin and compare the "old" with the "new" hypotheses.
- b. Taking into account your answer to the previous question, do you think the discoverer's origin has always been debated on or is it rather a recent question?
- c. Consider and discuss with your classmates, in small groups, the reasons why you've come to the previous conclusion, trying to reach an agreement on the subject.

2 Is there a general agreement about the Discoverer's origin?

- a. According to Luis Arranz, what is the most probable hypothesis about Columbus' origin? What reasons does he give to reinforce this idea?
- b. Does the author's opinion agree with what your textbook says? And does it agree with what your teacher has taught you in class?
- c. Do you think there are reasons to doubt Columbus' origin? Why do you think there are so many hypotheses on the subject?

3 Columbus' language and his probable Sephardi origin.

- a. According to the author, probably Columbus spoke many languages but without being fluent in any of them. Why? Do you think this could explain the doubts about

his origin?

b. In the text, you can find more than one hypothesis which refers to Columbus' probable Sephardi origin. Identify them and answer this question: whatever the seaman's nationality was, could it make sense he tried to hide his nationality if he had Jewish roots? Why?

c. Make up a small project, using your textbook or with the help from the Internet, about the expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula and the diaspora of the Sephardi Jews.

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