

Name _____ Date _____

Adapted from *The Beginner's American History:* "Columbus"

by D. H. Montgomery

What happened after they had been at sea many days?

For more than thirty days, the three ships kept on their way toward the west. To the crew every day seemed like a year. From sunrise to sunset nothing was to be seen but water and sky. At last the men began to think that they were sailing on an ocean which had no end. They whispered among themselves that Columbus, their leader, had gone mad, and that if they kept on with him in command they should all be lost.

Twice, indeed, there was a joyful cry of Land! Land! But when they got nearer they saw that what they had thought was land was nothing but banks of clouds. Then some of the sailors said, "Let us go to the admiral¹ and tell him that we must turn back."

③

But when the crew went to Columbus and told him that they would go no further, he became angry. He sternly ordered them to their work, stating that whatever might happen, he would not give up the voyage.

Signs of Land

The very next day there were signs of land that gave courage to even the most cowardly of the crew. The men had already noticed great flocks of land birds flying toward the west, as if to guide them. Now some of the men on one ship saw a branch of a thornbush float by. It was plain that it had not long been broken off from the bush, and it was full of red berries.

⑤

But one of the crew on the other vessel found something better even than the thornbranch; for he drew out of the water a carved walking stick. Everyone saw that such a stick must have been cut and carved by human hands. These two signs could not be doubted. The men now felt sure that they were approaching the shore, and what was more, that there were people living in that strange country.

¹**admiral:** master of a ship

Discovery of Land

That evening Columbus begged his crew to keep a sharp lookout, and he promised a nice coat to the one who should first see land. Everyone was excited, and no man closed his eyes in sleep that night.

Columbus himself stood on a high part of his ship, looking steadily toward the west. About ten o'clock he saw a moving light; it seemed like a torch carried in a man's hand. He called to a companion and asked him if he could see anything of the kind; yes, he, too, plainly saw the moving light, but presently it disappeared.

⑧

Two hours after midnight a cannon was fired from the lead ship. It was the glad signal that the long-looked-for land was actually in sight. There it lay directly ahead, about six miles away.

Then Columbus gave the order to furl² sails, and the three vessels came to a stop and waited for the dawn. When the sun rose on Friday, October 12th, 1492, Columbus saw a beautiful island with many trees growing on it. That was his first sight of the New World.

²**furl:** gather and roll up

- 1 As used in the first paragraph, what is the meaning of "in command"?
 - A in trouble
 - B in charge
 - C in need of help
 - D in need of respect

- 2 In paragraph 3, what is the meaning of *sternly*?
 - A finally
 - B seriously
 - C eagerly
 - D willingly

- 3 In paragraph 5, what is the meaning of *doubted*?
- A judged
 - B trusted
 - C believed
 - D questioned
- 4 In paragraph 5, what is the meaning of *approaching*?
- A coming near to
 - B giving space to
 - C moving away from
 - D stepping back from
- 5 In paragraph 8, what is the meaning of *actually*?
- A often
 - B really
 - C possibly
 - D sometimes