

### Resource 3: Is this map worth \$10 million?

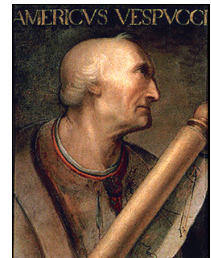
When Columbus returned to Spain from his first trip in 1492, word spread pretty quickly that he found a way to get east by sailing west. Needless to say, word of his accomplishment spread just as quickly. But Columbus reported that he landed in the Far East - the “Indies.”

Columbus made three more trips in 1493, 1498 and 1502. It is still not clear whether Columbus knew he landed on a continent that was unknown in Europe, or whether he died in May of 1506 still believing that he was in the Far East.

Other explorers followed Columbus because they wanted to become richer by finding valuable resources such as gold, silver, gems, silks, and spices. Kings and queens also wanted to grow their empires by claiming lands that had not yet been claimed. And, some wanted to spread their Christian religion to people who were not Christians.

As explorers visited and claimed new lands, they returned to Europe describing the locations and places where they had been. Mapmakers gradually began adding that information to their maps. Others began to think that the land that Columbus landed on in 1492 was not part of the Far East. At one point, Columbus himself started using terms like “East Indies” and “West Indies” to distinguish between the places that he and others like Marco Polo had been.

One of the men who followed Columbus was an explorer from the city of Florence, Italy. His name was Amerigo Vespucci. Vespucci made at least two trips between 1497 and 1504 to areas that Columbus explored. In a letter that he apparently wrote in 1503, he concluded that the place where both he and Columbus explored was not the Far East (Asia) but “Mundus Novus,” which means “New World.” His words appear below:



*A few days ago I wrote you at some length about my return from those new regions we searched for...and which can properly be called a "New World", since our forebears had absolutely no knowledge of it, nor do any of those who are hearing about it today...On 7 August 1501, we dropped our anchor off the shores of that new land, thanking God with solemn prayers and the celebration of the Mass. Once there, we determined that the new land was not an island but a continent...*

— Amerigo Vespucci, *Mundus Novus*, Letter to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici

Copies of Vespucci’s letter made their way around Europe. One of the people who read it was a German mapmaker named Martin Waldseemuller. Waldseemuller took the information that he had been receiving from explorers and created the map that you looked at in the warm-up activity for this lesson. He also appears to be the author of a book about the map. The book and the map were published in 1507.

If you look closely in the lower left hand corner of Martin Waldseemuller's map you will see the word "America" appearing for the very first time on a map (see the yellow arrow). The word appears in the earliest known map of what is now called South America.

In the introduction to the book that came with the map, Waldseemuller wrote:

*I see no reason why anyone could properly disapprove of a name derived from that of Amerigo, the discoverer, a man of sagacious genius. A suitable form would be Amerige, meaning Land of Amerigo, or America, since Europe and Asia have received women's names.*

In other words, they turned "Amerigo" - a man's name - into a woman's name "America" just as they did when they named other continents.



If you look at the top of the map above, you will see the images of two men near the center. Can you read the name of the man on the right (see yellow arrow)?

And can you see the name America for the first time in the lower left hand corner of the map? This map has been called "America's birth certificate" because it represents the official naming of our continent, just like your birth certificate makes your name official.

Martin Waldseemuller's map and the book were read widely. The name stuck. And the continent on which we live has forever since been called America in honor of Amerigo Vespucci - a man who suggested that ours was a "Mundus Novus" (or New World).

So, a big question is...do you think the map was worth \$10 million?