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Born in 1451 in the seafaring nation of Genoa in northern Italy, Christopher Columbus grew up watching ships sail into the harbor loaded with riches from Egypt, Spain, England, and Belgium. Columbus was convinced that he could gain gold, silk, ivory, and much personal wealth for himself if he were to sail west from Europe to the East and trade with China and India. When Queen Isabella of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon finally provided him with three ships, a crew, and supplies for his journey, Columbus embarked on the first of four voyages to the East in 1492. Although he never reached Asia, he did land in Central and South America, establishing a firm foothold in America and opening up wider European exploration to the new continent and other foreign lands.

Demi portrays Columbus as a great navigator and explorer, but she also provides a balanced view of his accomplishments, describing his enslavement of the native Taino Indians of Central America and his mismanagement of the colonies that he established in the Indies. Using Chinese paintbrushes and inks, gold overlays, and Italian marbled paper from Florence, Italy, she paints Columbus's vast world with characteristic skill and beauty.

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