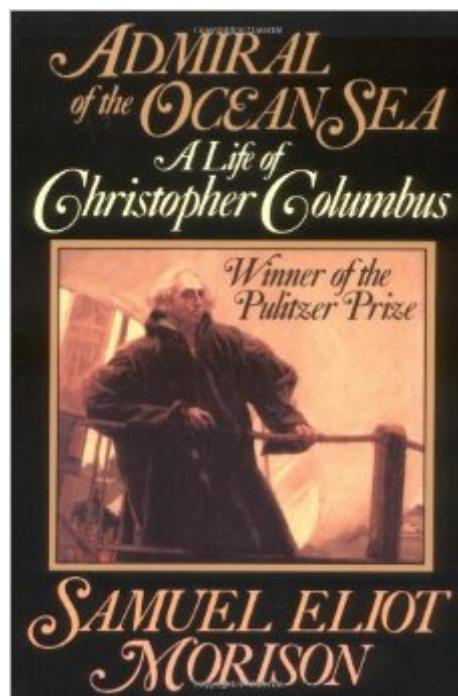


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Admiral Of The Ocean Sea: A Life Of Christopher Columbus



Synopsis

Telling the story of the greatest sailor of them all, "Admiral of the Ocean Sea" is a vivid and definitive biography of Columbus that details all of his voyages that, for better or worse, changed the world. 50 drawings, maps & charts; 4 fold-outs.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was one of the most enjoyable biographies I've read. The most distinguishing thing about this book of course is the fact that Morison recreated the voyages before his writing the book. This recreation lends credibility to his writing. But more than that, it makes much of the book, particularly those parts at sea, seem as if the reader is experiencing the voyages through the person of Columbus. Not only the particulars of what he saw, but the smells of land breezes, the feel of the trade winds, the motion of the boat. Morison's obvious love of the sea and of sailing work very much in his favor. Another strength is the historical perspective carefully provided by Morison. Knowing what was going on with Catholic Spain during Columbus' life (the defeat of the Moors, the expulsion of the Jews, political intrigue and conflict involving France, England, Portugal, and others) helps to explain the motivations of Columbus and his contemporaries. I was a bit wary of a 60-year old book, Pulitzer or no Pulitzer, in light of the more recent reconsiderations of Columbus. Some people would have us believe that the voyage of 1492 was some sort of original sin inflicted upon the paradise that was the western hemisphere. But in his preface, Morison makes it clear that he is concerned with Columbus, the "man of action", and is leaving analyses of his motivations to others. And at any rate, Morison's sensibilities are very much in tune with those of the year 2000. He makes few

apologies for Columbus and takes him to task where warranted, particularly for his treatment of the natives. One chapter, "Hell in Hispaniola", is almost exclusively devoted to this area.

Morison wrote this fine book in honor of the 450'th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. I think Morison would be surprised at how people's perceptions of the event have changed in the decades since. First off, let me say that the book is well worth reading. Morison was a man of the sea himself and he sailed in the same waters as Columbus. We see in the book how Columbus was a master seaman as well as being a great salesman, but on the other hand he was a poor geographer and even worse politician. The Portuguese were right in turning down his proposal for the Enterprise of the Indies, their geographers knew that Columbus was way off the mark regarding the distance from Europe to East Asia. In any event, they were making good progress down Africa and they felt it was just a matter of time until they found the bottom of the continent and the entrance to the Indian Ocean. I would now like to address the change in fortune for Columbus's reputation.(1) People now like to say that he didn't "discover" America. One reason is because there were already people (the American Indians) there, but that is simply world-games. Of course he "discovered" it, no one in Europe or Asia knew about it, and the Indians didn't know about Europe or Asia either. Secondly, the fact that Columbus wasn't necessarily the first to cross the Atlantic doesn't change anything. The Vikings who reached North America simply viewed it as another Arctic land and had no idea of the geographical relationship of this new continent to the rest of the world. In any event, they didn't exploit their discovery in the long run, only Columbus's voyage led to that.

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