A New Worldview in Europe

Christopher Columbus first thought about the possibility of reaching India by sailing west while working as a chartmaker in Lisbon, Portugal. Columbus, an Italian navigator, had gone to Lisbon after being shipwrecked off the Portuguese coast in 1476. While in Portugal he was in constant contact with ships' pilots and navigators who believed that islands existed west of the European continent. Columbus thought that they must be about 2,500 miles west of Europe.

Columbus's own sailing experience, and the information he had gathered from other sailors, gave him a great deal of information about wind directions and ocean currents. By using this knowledge properly, he believed he could safely reach India by sailing west.

Columbus first took his plan to King John II of Portugal in 1484, but the king was not interested in financing it. He felt that Columbus was underestimating the distance involved. Moreover, King John was backing explorations to find a sea route to India around the tip of Africa. Disappointed, Columbus went to Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain, but they were involved with expelling Muslims from Spain. In 1488 Columbus returned to Lisbon to petition King John again. As he did, word came that Bartolomeu Dias had successfully sailed around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa. That ended any possible Portuguese interest in Columbus's plan. Once more, Columbus went to the Spanish royal court. Finally, in April 1492, he received word of Isabella and Ferdinand's support.

At last, after eight years of presenting his plan to anyone who would listen, Columbus set sail. He headed first for the Canary Islands and from there he sailed due west. Study the map below, and answer the questions that follow.

**Crossing the Atlantic**
1. What ocean currents would have helped Columbus on his journey westward?

2. What winds would have helped Columbus sail westward?

3. What ocean currents would have helped Columbus on the return trip to Europe?

4. What winds would have helped on the return trip?

**Critical Thinking: Movement**

Why would Columbus have taken the slightly northward and southward routes shown on the map, rather than sailing on a straight path?
The Settling of the English Colonies

Between 1641 and 1760 the population of the English colonies on the North American mainland rose from 50,000 to approximately 1.6 million, expanding into new territory as it grew. The map below shows the spread of English colonial settlement during this period. Examine the map, and answer the questions that follow.

Colonial Settlement
1. What three English colonial regions are shown on the map?

2. What were the names and founding dates of the earliest English, French, and Spanish settlements shown on this map? What geographic characteristic did these settlements have in common?

3. Where were the main areas of English settlement by 1660? by 1760?

4. What mountainous areas are shown on the map? What settlements are shown west of the Appalachians?

5. Based on this map, why do you think rivers like the Connecticut, the Roanoke, and the James were important to settlers?

Critical Thinking: Movement
After examining the map carefully, describe the patterns of settlement in the English colonies. On what part of the continent did the English settle originally? What role did rivers play in human migration and town development? How did the Appalachian Mountains affect English settlement?