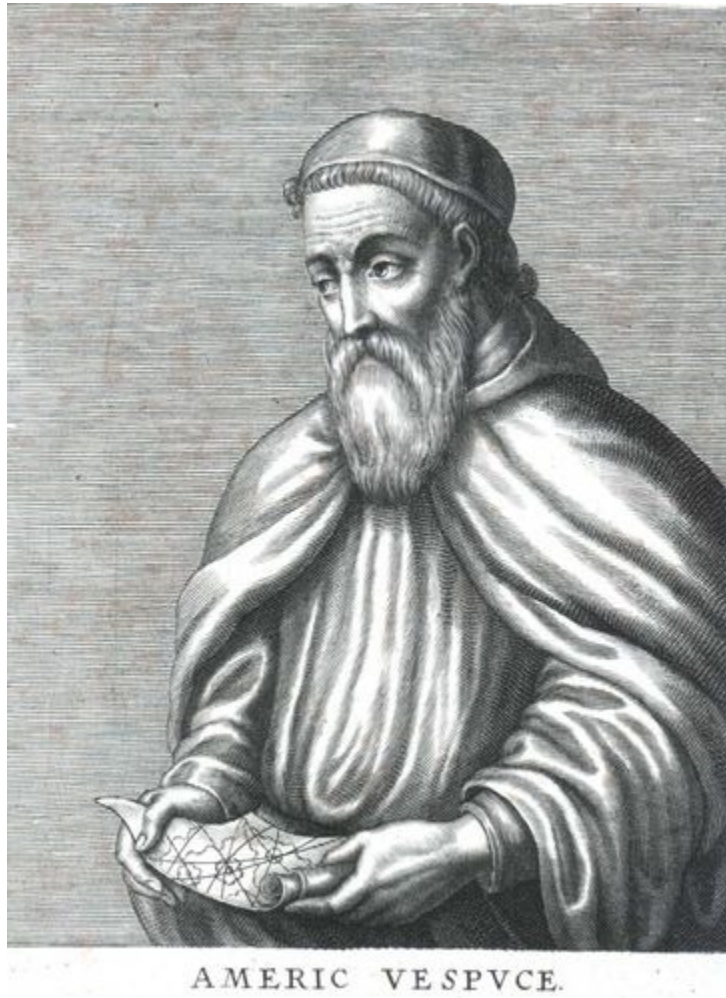


# Vikings and European Explorers - Amerigo Vespucci

by ReadWorks



AMERIC VESPVCE.

America is named after Amerigo Vespucci, an explorer from Italy who was born in 1454. A German mapmaker gave Vespucci this honor. The mapmaker didn't believe Christopher Columbus was the first European to reach the "New World" in 1492. At the time, Columbus himself wasn't even sure. He thought he had arrived at islands off the coast of Asia, not the New World. Meanwhile, Vespucci claimed to have reached the continent of South America in 1497. Because of his claim, the mapmaker named the new lands America after Vespucci in 1507. The name spread throughout Europe and stuck. People started using it for South America, North America, and later the United States of America.

Today, many scholars doubt whether Vespucci explored America before Columbus. They believe that Vespucci was wrongly given the honor. He explored South America, but it was probably years after Columbus already had. Perhaps, if the mapmaker favored Columbus,

America would have been called *Columbia*. Better yet, if the Vikings had been acknowledged as the first Europeans to reach the New World (which they were), the land could have been named after them.

Vespucci claimed to have reached South America four times. After his death, scholars looked into his records and found little evidence to support some of his claims. They also found out that Vespucci lied about leading the voyages. He was never the captain on any of his trips.