

Nobo Stories

The Vision of Christopher Columbus

by Robin Jensen

“Ridiculous!”

“You’re crazy!”

“You’ll die of thirst and hunger if you try to go that direction.”

“It’s impossible. It can’t be done!”

For 20 years, these words echoed in Christopher’s mind and he wondered if they might be true. But still...something inside of him knew that he was right. In fact, he felt that he was called to sail West.

When Christopher Columbus was growing up, Italy, Portugal, and Spain were in a race to find the best route from Europe to the Orient in the East. Everyone knew that whomever could find a cheaper way to and from India and China would be able to make lots of money by bringing silks and spices back to Europe. All three countries, however, felt that the only way to get to the East was to go east.

Columbus’ skill enabled him to work in all of the seaports of the day. Because of his great knowledge of the world and mapmaking, he was in great demand, especially in Portugal. In their effort to find the quickest way to the Orient, Portugal was constantly sending ships down the African coast. They needed someone who could map the new explorations as the ships came back to port and reported their finds.

In response to this exploration, Columbus came forward with a plan. He felt certain that he could get to China and India by going West. By this time, everyone knew that the world was a globe; the question was, how big was it? Columbus theorized the distance from Western Europe to Eastern China could only be 3000 miles at the most. That would make the globe about 10,000 miles in circumference. He figured that he would be able to sail to China in three to four weeks by sailing west from Europe.

He presented his plan to the king of Portugal, but the king told him that he would not support his quest; Portugal was counting on the African route being safer.

So, Columbus went to Spain.

For seven long years, Columbus importuned King Ferdinand for a hearing. But Columbus was generally regarded as a visionary. Even the children in the streets thought he was crazy. When, at last, the learned council condescended to make a report, it was to the effect that Columbus’ plan was too foolish to merit attention.

"It is absurd," they said, "to believe that there are people on the other side of the world, walking with their heels upward, and their heads hanging down. And then, how can a ship get there? The torrid zone, through which they must pass, is a region of fire, where the very waves boil. And even if a ship could perchance get around there safely, how could it ever get back? Can a ship sail uphill?"

Despite that report from the "experts," however, after three years, in 1492, the Spanish court finally agreed to finance his search to find a quicker trade route to the Indies.

You know the rest of the story...

Traveling about 150 miles a day, Columbus' crew indeed reached land in about four weeks, by sailing west from the Port of Spain. However, Columbus didn't land in the Indies or China. To his amazement, he found himself on an entirely different continent which was unknown to the rest of the world!

Despite all of his setbacks and discouragement, Christopher Columbus never gave up his dream; and he never held to the limited beliefs of his contemporaries. He said later in life, "You can never cross the ocean unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore."

All of this happened because Christopher Columbus was not boxed in by common thinking.

The Things That Haven't Been Done Before

The things that haven't been done before,
Those are the things to try;
Columbus dreamed of an unknown shore
At the rim of the far-flung sky,
And his heart was bold and his faith was strong
As he ventured in dangers new,
And he paid no heed to the jeering throng
Or the fears of the doubting crew.

The many will follow the beaten track
With guideposts on the way.
They live and have lived for ages back
With a chart for every day.
Someone has told them it's safe to go
On the road he has traveled o'er,
And all that they ever strive to know
Are the things that were known before.

A few strike out, without map or chart,
Where never a man has been,
From the beaten paths they draw apart
To see what no man has seen.
There are deeds they hunger alone to do;
Though battered and bruised and sore,
They blaze the path for the many, who
Do nothing not done before.

The things that haven't been done before
Are the tasks worthwhile today;
Are you one of the flock that follows, or
Are you one that shall lead the way?
Are you one of the timid souls that quail
At the jeers of a doubting crew,
Or dare you, whether you win or fail,
Strike out for a goal that's new?

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)

It Couldn't Be Done

Somebody said that it couldn't be done
But he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it!
Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;
At least no one ever has done it;"
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure,
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

by Edgar Albert Guest, 1917

(For a great youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOx7cfW4ZU8>)

Additional Books/Stories

- **An Awesome Book** by *Dallas Clayton* (Ages 4-up). A book about dreaming big!
- **Not a Box** by *Antoinette Portis* (Ages 3-8). A real box becomes so much more than just a box.
- **Red Knit Cap Girl** by *Naoko Stoop* (Ages 3-6). A little girl and her animal friends go on a journey to meet the moon.
- **Me...Jane** by *Patrick McDonnell* (Ages 4-10). The true story of Jane Goodall's childhood that inspired her to study and live with gorillas.
- **Perfect Square** by *Michael Hall* (All Ages). A perfect square gets cut up, and finds another way to be happy.
- **Harold and the Purple Crayon** by *Crockett Johnson* (Ages 4-8). Harold creates the world he wants from his imagination by drawing it.