Early Life and Origins: Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy, around 1451. His full name in Italian was Cristoforo Colombo. He came from a middle-class family, and his father was a weaver and small-time merchant. Columbus grew up in a maritime city, which influenced his fascination with sea exploration and navigation.

Navigational Ambitions: From a young age, Columbus showed a keen interest in exploration and believed in the possibility of reaching Asia by sailing westward. Inspired by the writings of ancient geographers like Ptolemy and Strabo, he was convinced that the Earth was round, and he sought funding to embark on a westward route to Asia, which eventually led to his historic voyage.

Sponsorship and Voyage: After numerous rejections from various European monarchs, Columbus finally secured the sponsorship of King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile, who united Spain. They agreed to fund his ambitious expedition in 1492, hoping to find a new trade route to Asia and spread Christianity.

Discovery of the New World: On October 12, 1492, after a long and perilous journey across the Atlantic Ocean, Columbus and his crew made landfall in the Bahamas. Though he believed he had reached Asia, he had, in fact, discovered the New World, specifically the islands of the Caribbean.

Conflicting Legacies: Columbus's voyage to the Americas had far-reaching consequences, often celebrated as a historic encounter between two worlds. However, it also led to European colonization, exploitation of indigenous peoples, and the transatlantic slave trade, which has sparked debates and controversies surrounding his legacy.

Additional Voyages: Columbus made a total of four voyages to the Americas between 1492 and 1504. During these expeditions, he explored various Caribbean islands, the coasts of Central and South America, and the shores of present-day Venezuela and Panama.

Title of "Admiral of the Ocean Sea": As a reward for his discoveries, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella granted Columbus the title of "Admiral of the Ocean Sea" and appointed him as the viceroy and governor of the lands he encountered. However, his governance was marked by conflicts with settlers and the Crown, leading to his eventual removal from power.

Personal Challenges: Columbus faced numerous hardships during his voyages, including mutinies, shipwrecks, and strained relations with his crew. On his fourth and final expedition, he and his men were stranded on the island of Jamaica for nearly a year before being rescued.

Controversial Death and Burial: Columbus died on May 20, 1506, in Valladolid, Spain, at the age of approximately 54. Initially buried in Valladolid, his remains were later transported to Seville and then to Santo Domingo in present-day Dominican Republic. After several transfers over the centuries, it is believed that his remains now rest in Seville Cathedral, though this claim remains disputed.

Varying Commemoration: Columbus Day, celebrated on the second Monday of October in the United States, was established to honor his first voyage and is a federal holiday. However, in recent years, the holiday has faced criticism due to the negative impact of European colonization on indigenous populations. Some states and cities have chosen to rename or replace the holiday with Indigenous Peoples' Day or Native American Day, focusing on acknowledging the history and cultures of Native American peoples.