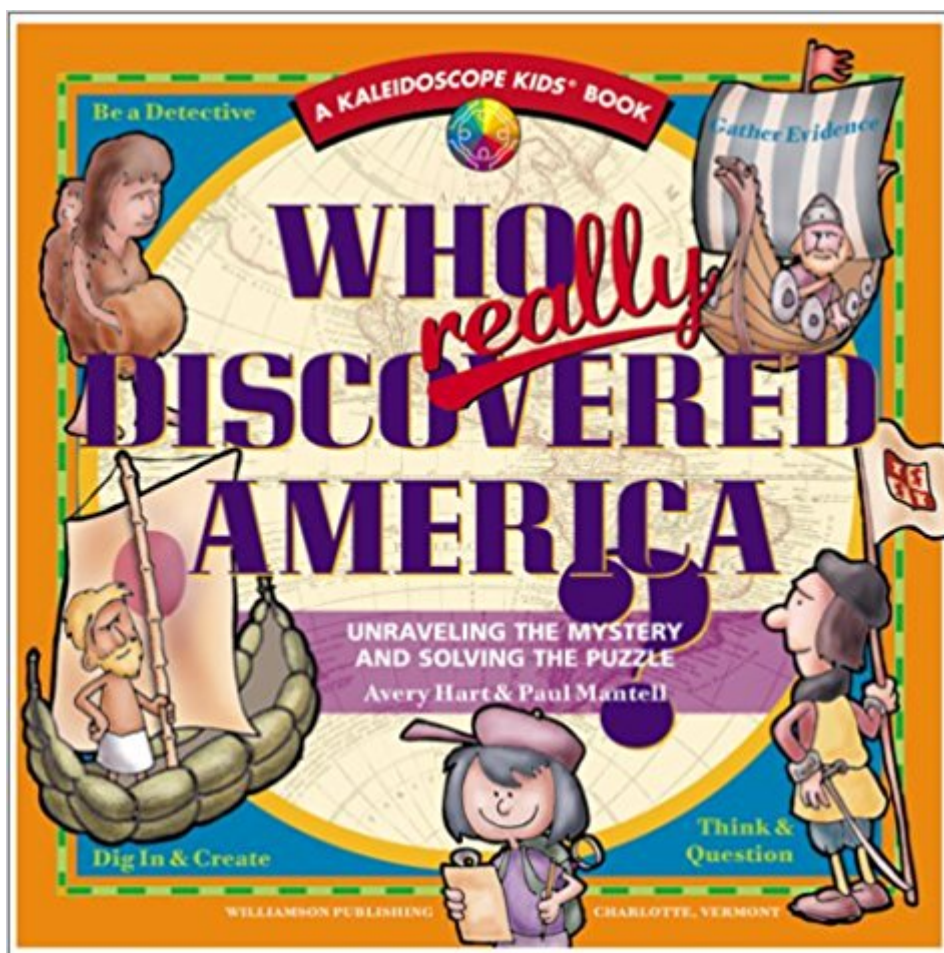


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# Who Really Discovered America?: Unraveling The Mystery & Solving The Puzzle (Kaleidoscope Kids Books (Williamson Publishing))



## Synopsis

This title is suitable for ages 9 to 12 years. Lifelong learning happens when kids themselves assess information, produce a visual work to 'cement' this understanding, voice their opinions, and draw their own conclusions, guided by the facts as they are known today. And that's what really does happen in this book. Facts, myths, evidence, beliefs? Kids discover firsthand within their own experiences, thoughts, imaginations, and belief systems how easy it is for hearsay to turn into fact, and how often we confuse beliefs and facts. Who writes the history books? Kids are encouraged to question what they read, to explore contradictions, and to discover how it is that ancient history can be so 'alive' and still changing today. Columbus? Making it real! Kids make a Viking ship and an amazing sod house, a Kon Tiki-style raft, petroglyphs and cave paintings; they trace ocean currents with coloured water; decipher ancient language links; write a Viking saga; build a Native American-style mini-mound city; and weigh evidence pro and con. Hart and Mantell lead kids on a wonderful, enlightening journey about truth, brotherhood, humanity, wealth, freedom, and discovery. But the best gift is that the kids who use this book will know that Hart and Mantell trust them unconditionally to draw their own honest conclusions. This title is suitable for ages 8 - 14.

## Book Information

Series: Kaleidoscope Kids Books (Williamson Publishing)

Paperback: 96 pages

Publisher: Williamson Publishing Company (June 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1885593465

ISBN-13: 978-1885593467

Product Dimensions: 10 x 10 x 0.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.3 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #286,875 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #143 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Exploration & Discovery #957 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States #1983 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World

## Customer Reviews

Gr 5-7-A lively guide that teaches how to investigate history while it explores and explains various theories about the discovery of America. Short sound bites of information are grouped in loosely

organized chapters that illuminate 10 theories about the "discovery" of America, e.g., the Land-Bridge Theory, the Multiple-Migration Theory, the Woden-lithi Theory, etc. But hard facts are only half the story here. Interspersed are a hodgepodge of ideas, suggestions, and projects that invite readers to think, question, search, and uncover the truth for themselves. Exercises and activities cover general topics-friendly versus unfriendly ways to disagree, the place of "wild" ideas in research-as well as specific ones-making maps, plaster-casting footprints, and more. Hart and Mantell often remind students of the importance of remaining fair and open-minded. Ultimately, they leave it up to readers to use the techniques in the book to decide which of the theories seems most likely to be true "for now." A final reminder notes that the question of who really discovered America will remain open in the future since "new information is always being uncovered." The volume has a workbook look with oversized pages bordered in black and gray designs and illustrations consisting of black-and-white cartoons, sketches, maps, and photographs. A useful and thought-provoking tool.

Susan L. Rogers, Chestnut Hill Academy, PA  
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Your assumption might be that a book entitled "Who Really Discovered America?" would be one that makes the case for the discovering of the Americas by the Vikings rather than Christopher Columbus, but those are only a pair of the possibilities here. The complete title of Avery Hart's Kaleidoscope Kids Book is "Who Really Discovered America? Unraveling the Mystery & Solving the Puzzle" and if there is one thing you need to know before diving into this book it would be that you are not going to get the answer as the end. That is because the point here is to present young readers, ages 7-14, with all of the opinions and theories that make up the evidence for this particular historical puzzle. The goal is not to answer the question as to who really discovered America but rather to instruct readers on the mysterious ways in which history reveals itself to inquiring minds. Recognizing that truth tacking is not easy, Hart provides his young readers with a five-point "Star Guide" to allow them to weigh the merits of the ideas they come across in this book. The idea is that each point on the star (or each finger on your hand) represents a particular point for which you can award 0 to 5 points for each theory: (1) Start with what you know: how does the new theory support the facts as you know them? (2) Throw out old opinions: Is your mind really open or do you secretly want a particular idea to be true (or untrue)? (3) Review the theory evidence: what specific evidence supports the theory and how reliable is it? (4) Use intuition: what does your gut say about the theory? (5) Put it all together: overall, does the idea make sense and fit with the other puzzle pieces? If you believe a theory is absolutely true it would score 25 points. Throughout the book the

"Truth Trackers" are presented with not two but ten different theories to evaluate and see which one comes closest to the truth and earns the highest score: (1) The Land-Bridge Theory that humans first crossed a strip of land from Russia to Alaska; (2) The Multiple-Migration Theory that the first people to discover the Western Hemisphere came by boats, in small groups, over thousands of years; (3) The Woden-Lithi Theory that an ancient Scandinavian king traveled from Norway, across the Atlantic, and up the St. Lawrence River to Toronto in about 1750 B.C.; (4) The Lakota Theory that all human life began in the Black Hills of the Dakotas; (5) The Alien Theory that gifted aliens came to earth to marry the first apelike prehumans and create the intelligent human beings of today; (6) Van Sertima's African Theory that Africans arrived in America almost 2,000 years before Columbus; (7) Professor Xu's Asian Theory that refugees from the Chinese Shang dynasty influenced the development of the Olmec civilization; (8) The Other Way-Around Theory that ancient people from the Americas took to the oceans and sailed on currents to Africa, Asia, or Europe; (9) The Vikings "Discovered" America; and (10) Columbus "Discovered" America. For most of these theories Hart lays about the specific evidence for and against it to assist young readers to be "a history-in-the-making detective." Students are required to separate fact from fiction, search for artifacts, explore language links, interpret petroglyphs, trace ocean currents, and debate the different theories. Along the way they will learn a little bit about different peoples, from Kennewick Man and Spirit Caveman to the Red Paint People, Olmec, and Mound Builders. There are also creative activities such as building a Viking ship and a "Kon Tiki"-style reed boat, growing a sod house, writing a Viking saga, estimating a tree's age, making a giant-sized drawing, baking Taino bread, giving Columbus a grade in geography, taking a survey, and inventing a new holiday to celebrate the Americas. There is an entire grade school unit of at least two-weeks in length packaged in the 96-pages of "Who Really Discovered America?" Students should be excited by the prospect of being a detective, gathering the evidence, thinking about and questioning that evidence, and engaging in creative projects. Just the idea that the "right" answer (or the "truth," if you will) is debatable is an important lesson. Students will have the "beginning of a deeper understanding of what discovery and America are really all about," but will also realize that new information about the discovery of America is always being uncovered and that the question remains open in the future. In fact, finding out about that new information could be part of the project.

This is not your grandmother's activity/history book. It asks students to look deeper and challenges all of us to question our assumptions; disagree civilly and make a case for ourselves; and aim for objectivity overall. It also invites the reader to be a participant along with the authors, taking their

own journey, as it were, to discover the truth. Best of all, it doesn't talk down to kids - it talks to them and with them. If you have kids, teach kids or know kids - I recommend this book.

The book is very leading!

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