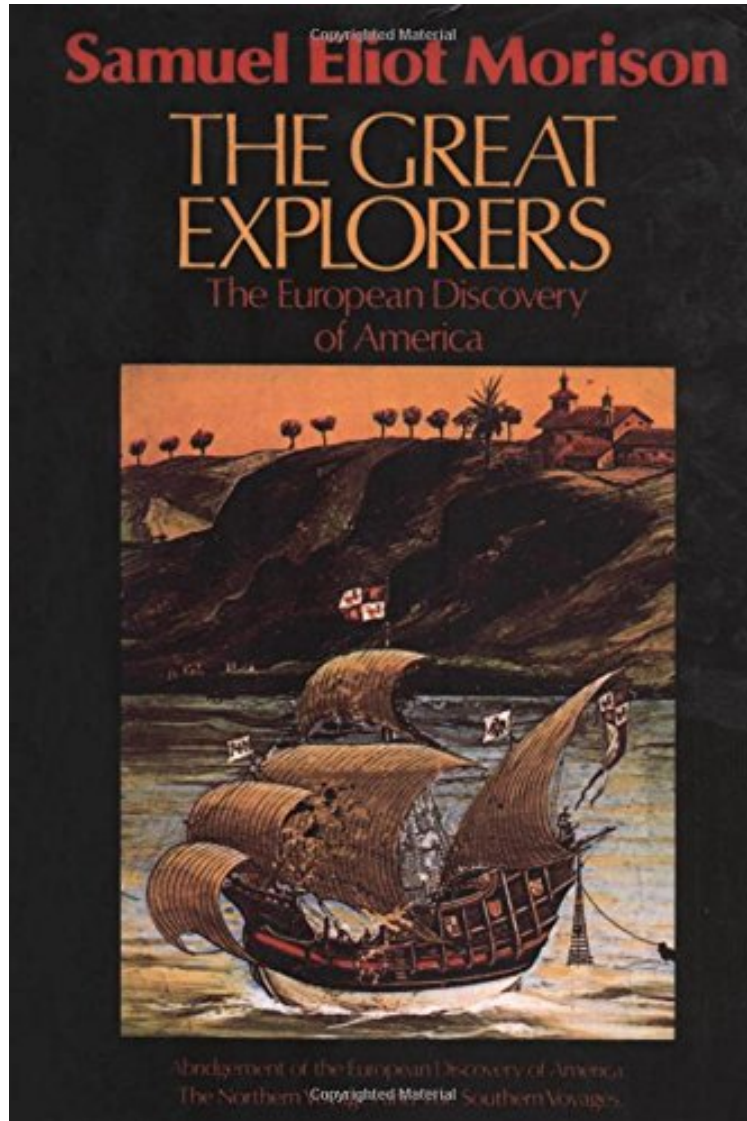


The Great Explorers: The European Discovery of America

Samuel Eliot Morison

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Samuel Eliot Morison : The Great Explorers: The European Discovery of America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Great Explorers: The European Discovery of America:

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. A Fascinating Story, told as if to Friends at a Dinner Party By Roger D. Launius A few days before my comprehensive examinations for my Ph.D. in American history in 1981 I went to see my advisor in the History Department at LSU. In the course of our conversation he asked me, in what

could only be interpreted as a rather strange question that I think says more about my advisor's weird sense of humor than anything else, to name for him the three great colonial America historians whose names began with "M." Who thinks like that? I answered with Edmund S. Morgan, Perry Miller, but I blanked on anyone else. He had been thinking of, in addition to Morgan and Miller, Samuel Elliott Morrison. I nodded in agreement. I hadn't really read any of Morrison's work at the time so he was not much on my mind, but I also don't put him in a class with the other two historians; he was essentially an historian of naval warfare and seafaring. Moreover, I didn't have much interest in those subjects. I still don't have too much interest in those topics, but my appreciation of Morrison is somewhat enhanced by reading this volume, a condensation of a massive two-volume work called "The European Discovery of America," with a volume dedicated to "The Northern Voyages" (1971), 500-1600, and "The Southern Voyages" (1974), 1492-1616. It is an exhaustive and exhausting work, not quite as massive as the original but still hefty, and filled with stories and anecdotes, sea lore and witticisms, some of which are even true. In it one will find more than one ever wants to know about Christopher Columbus, Ferdinand Magellan, John Cabot, Jacques Cartier, Francis Drake, and the like. It's not a bad read at all, between stories of voyages of discovery, Morrison tells us the minute differences between a square rigger and a sloop, the nature of 8 bells, the origins of the "smoking lamp," and the like. The many stories of explorers and voyagers are well narrated. There is an old-fashioned feel to the narrative, as the author regales us with extravagant stories as if we were sitting in his club with a glass of sherry during an evening gathering. Morrison does everything but use the term "dear reader" to draw us into his asides; in fact I think he might use that term too. I kept thinking to myself as I read, "well, they don't make them like this anymore." Perhaps that's for the best. Even so, I stayed with the 752 page book so it held my attention well enough. For a more useful and up-to-date take on the subject, however, I would recommend Felipe Fernandez-Armesto's "Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration" (Norton, 2006). I should say something about the oddly-structured account offered here. Morrison originally wrote two books overlapping in time and geography, but the mash-up of them in this single volume does not work all that well because of a loss of chronology. Accordingly, the northern voyages are discussed first and then we go back in time to pick up the southern voyages. It might have been better to restructure the chapters a bit to create a reasonable chronology. Even so, it is an interesting book. Well worth reading, but perhaps not as an introduction to the exploration of the Americas. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Walt concerned Very good. Thank you. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Inessential edition By HH It is difficult to imagine why this one-volume abridgement of the author's "European Discovery of America" in two volumes ("The Northern Voyages", 1971, "The Southern Voyages", 1974) was published. The condensation is sometimes rough and involved no revision; purchasers able to afford it can also afford the two volumes, as all admirers of Morrison will want to. For style alone -- cantankerous, colorful, personal and expansive -- the Admiral's work requires the fuller and more leisureed appreciation.

This is an abridgement of Samuel Morison's magnum opus, The European Discovery of America, in which he describes the early voyages that led to the discovery of the New World. All the acclaimed Morison touches are here - the meticulous research and authoritative scholarship, along with the personal and compelling narrative style that gives the reader the feeling of having been there. Morison, of course, has been there, and The Great Explorers is enriched with photographs and maps he made while personally retracing the great voyages.

"This edition is a welcome and handy reference to the major explorations, written by one of the most eminent historians of the century."--Bookman's Weekly "The best of [Morison's classic] accounts of the first voyages to North and South America were distilled...into this nicely illustrated abridgement."--Philadelphia Inquirer "In this magisterial work, the late Samuel Eliot Morison presents the voyages of the Cabots, Gilbert, Frobisher, Columbus, Magellan, Drake, and others. This paperback is chock full of maps, seafaring techniques, and all the excitement of a good adventure yarn."--Cultural Information Service On The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages: "What a story! And how worthily the writer tells it!...To read this book is to be a privileged passenger on the bridge beside a master mariner who...imparts the wisdoms of the deep in tones of a salty tang--brisk, skeptical, yet always measured."--The New York Times Book "One of the most readable and gripping histories in decades."--Boston Globe "It is in all ways admirable, written with wit and easy scholarship, and loaded with maps and pictures....[Morison] at his entertaining best."--The New Yorker "This is a great book by a great historian."--Virginia Quarterly On The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages: "An epic work of true grandeur."--Journal of Southern History "Dazzling."--The New Yorker. "An exemplary work of historical writing."--Newsweek. About the Author The late Samuel Eliot Morison, twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize, was the author of numerous books including The Oxford History of the American People, The Growth of the American Republic, and Admiral of the Ocean, a biography of Columbus.