



## STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (166)

**TEXT:** *El Nuevo Mundo. Los viajes de Amerigo Vespucci (1497-1504)*

**AUTHOR:** Amerigo Vespucci

**EDITOR:** Jean-Paul Duviols

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### I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

The fame of **Amerigo Vespucci** is inextricably linked to the controversy of the naming of the American continent. However, beyond the "usurpation" debate, his travel relations—*Cartas familiares*, *Mundus Novus*, and *Lettera*—represent one of the most significant editorial successes in the history of the printing press. Vespucci was the first to explicitly identify the newly found territories not as the eastern edge of Asia, but as a distinct "New World."

This deluxe edition, edited by Jean-Paul Duviols, recovers the historical and literary value of these chronicles. Vespucci's writings provided the foundation for the European imaginary of the West, combining rigorous astronomical observation with vivid, often exotic, descriptions of the flora, fauna, and indigenous peoples of the Southern Hemisphere.

### II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES (by Jean-Paul Duviols)

#### *The "America" Controversy:*

Analyze the role of the **Gymnase Vosgien** and Martin Waldseemüller in the publication of the *Cosmographiae Introductio* (1507). Discuss the justification for naming the continent "America" based on Vespucci's perceived discovery.

Examine the rivalry between the supporters of Columbus and Vespucci. Was it a deliberate theft of glory or a consequence of editorial timing and the power of the printed word?

#### *Scientific Navigation vs. Dead Reckoning:*

Compare Vespucci's methods with those of Columbus. Discuss Vespucci's role as **Piloto Mayor** and his emphasis on astronomical observation (the stars of the Southern Cross) to determine latitude and longitude.

How did his scientific background as an astronomer and cartographer change the way the "New World" was mapped?

#### *The First Ethnological Experience:*

Analyze Vespucci's descriptions of the indigenous populations. Focus on his encounters with "giants," "cannibals," and the paradisiacal nature of the "Land of Parrots."

Discuss the impact of his stay in a tropical jungle village, often cited as the first "ethnological" experience in the history of the Americas.



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**The "Mundus Novus" Concept:**

Explore the significance of the term "New World." How did Vespucci's realization that he had found a new continent challenge the classical knowledge of the Antiquity and the geography of Ptolemy?

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### III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

**Vespucci as a Best-Seller:** Research why Vespucci's letters were translated into multiple languages and widely distributed while Columbus's journals remained largely unknown to the general European public for decades.

**The Imaginary of the Exotic:** Analyze how Vespucci's vivid descriptions contributed to the European myth of the "noble savage" and the "terrible cannibal." How much of his writing reflects reality vs. literary convention?

**Mapping the Unknown:** Using the provided references to the Waldseemüller map (1507), discuss how cartography transitioned from a medieval worldview to a modern one following Vespucci's voyages.

**Literary Merit:** Can Vespucci's chronicles be considered the precursors to the "adventure novel" ? Analyze his engaging style and its appeal to the 16th-century reader.

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### IV. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

- **The Age of Discovery: Deluxe Collection:** *Viajes a Las Indias (Colón), El Nuevo Mundo (Vespucci), Maluco.*
- **Colonial Latin America:** *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias, Cristobal Colon – Viajes a Las Indias, Verdadera Historia y Descripción de un País, Usos y Costumbres de los Salvajes de Virginia, Viajes al Río de la Plata y a Potosí.*

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