New World and Old World
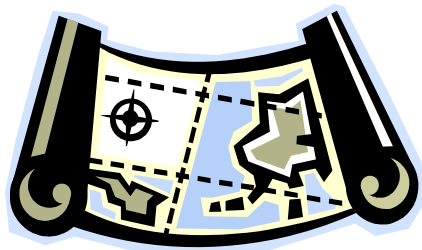
The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy (Third Edition, 2002) defines the **Old World** as....

"the Eastern Hemisphere, especially Europe, as opposed to the New World - the Americas".

The **Old World** consists of those parts of Earth known to Europeans before the voyages of Christopher Columbus: Europe, Asia, and Africa. Although the interior regions of Asia and Africa were not well known to Europeans at the time, their existence was known, at least as far as Japan and South Africa, so they are considered *Old World*. Australia and Antarctica are neither definitely Old World nor definitely New World, since the terms "Old World" and "New World" were used before their discovery by Europeans.

The **New World** is one of the names used for the American continents, in use since the 16th century. The Americas were at that time *new* to the Europeans, to whom the "Old World" consisted of only Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Today the terms "New World" and "Old World" are generally used in a historical context when talking about the European discovery of the Americas, as in discussions of Spanish exploration, Christopher Columbus, et cetera. The term is also used to refer to evidence of biological organisms: organisms of the Americas are considered "New World," and organisms of Europe, Asia, and Australasia are considered to be "Old World."

Notice that while the Americas are always described as "New World," Australasia can be described as either "Old World" or "New World," depending on the topic of discussion.

Source: Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_World>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_World>

Discussion Questions:
- ✓ *From what perspective is the world seen as being divided into the "Old World" and the "New World"?*
- ✓ *How many students in your group think of Europe as the "Old World" and the Americas as the "New World"?*
- ✓ *Is the "Old World" really older than the "New World"?*
- ✓ *How would indigenous peoples perceive this view of the world?*