



*Christopher Columbus*

The True Story Bro

# Take out a piece of paper

- Write a half page in complete sentences what you know about Christopher Columbus. Explain what adjectives you would use to describe him. Explain how he is viewed in most classrooms today.
- When you are done with your summary, draw a line across the page and write on the left “ After learning about Christopher Columbus.” Then underline.

# How is he viewed today?

- Found the Americas
- Pioneer in exploration
- Has his own American Holiday
- Was a hero

## Words that can describe him

- Brave/courageous
- Heroic
- Pioneer
- Navigator
- Colonizer
- Honorable
- Educational
- Fearless
- Bold

# What did he *really* pioneer?

- **Christopher Columbus introduced two phenomena that revolutionized race relations and transformed the modern world:**
  1. **the taking of land, wealth, and labor from indigenous peoples leading to their near extermination**
  2. **the transatlantic slave trade, which created a racial underclass.**

Columbus' **OWN** diary entry of the Arawak people he encountered

- **His initial impression of the Arawaks was quite favorable.**
- **He wrote in his journal on October 13, 1492:**
  - *"At daybreak great multitudes of men came to the shore, all young and of fine shapes, and very handsome. Their hair was not curly but loose and coarse like horse-hair. All have foreheads much broader than any people I had hitherto seen. Their eyes are large and very beautiful. They are not black, but the color of the inhabitants of the Canaries."*

Columbus' **OWN** diary entry of the Arawak people he encountered (continued)

- **Finally, he got down to business:**
- **"I was very attentive to them, and strove to learn if they had any gold. Seeing some of them with little bits of metal hanging at their noses, I gathered from them by signs that by going southward or steering round the island in that direction, there would be found a king who possessed great cups full of gold."**
- **At dawn the next day, Columbus sailed to the other side of the island, probably one of the Bahamas, and saw two or three villages. He ended his description of them with these menacing words:**

***"I could conquer the whole of them with fifty men and govern them as I pleased."***

# First Voyage

- **On his first voyage, Columbus kidnapped some ten to twenty-five Indians and took them back with him to Spain. Only seven or eight of the Indians arrived alive.**





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# Second Voyage

- **Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain provided Columbus with seventeen ships, 1,200 to 1,500 men, cannons, crossbows, guns, cavalry, and attack dogs for a second voyage.**
- *What does it sound like Columbus is preparing to do?*





# Second Voyage

- **When Columbus and his men returned to Haiti in 1493, they demanded food, gold, spun cotton-whatever the Indians had that they wanted, including sex with their women.**
- **To ensure cooperation -> Columbus used punishment by example.**
  - **minor offense= the Spanish cut off his ears or nose. Disfigured, the person was sent back to his village as living evidence of the brutality the Spaniards were capable of.**



# Second Voyage

- **In 1495 the Spanish on Haiti initiated a great slave raid.**
  - They rounded up 1,500 Arawaks, selected the 500 best specimens (of whom 200 would die en route to Spain).
  - Another 500 were chosen as slaves for the Spaniards staying on the island. The rest were released.
- **A Spanish eyewitness:**
  - *"Among them were many women who had infants at the breast. They, in order the better to escape us, since they were afraid we would turn to catch them again, left their infants anywhere on the ground and started to flee like desperate people; and some fled so far that they were removed from our settlement of Isabela seven or eight days beyond mountains and across huge rivers; wherefore from now on scarcely any will be had."*
- **Columbus became excited.**
  - *He wrote to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1496. "In Castile, Portugal, Aragon,.. . and the Canary Islands they need many slaves..."*
  - *He viewed the Indian death rate optimistically: "Although they die now, they will not always die. The Negroes and Canary Islanders died at first."*

# Investigation into Columbus atrocities and subsequent arrest

- According to the report
  - Columbus once punished a man found guilty of stealing corn by having his ears and nose cut off and then selling him into slavery.
  - Testimony recorded in the report- Columbus congratulated his brother Bartolomé on "defending the family" when the latter ordered a woman paraded naked through the streets and then had her tongue cut out for suggesting that Columbus was of lowly birth.
- How Columbus put down native unrest and revolt;
  - He first ordered a brutal crackdown in which many natives were killed and then paraded their dismembered bodies through the streets in an attempt to discourage further rebellion.
- *"Columbus' government was characterized by a form of tyranny," Consuelo Varela, a Spanish historian who has seen the document, told journalists. "Even those who loved him [Columbus] had to admit the atrocities that had taken place."*
- Based on these testimonies, Columbus was chained and imprisoned to await return to Spain. On 1 October 1500, Columbus and his two brothers, likewise in chains, were sent back to Spain.

Columbus becomes governor

- In the words of Hans Koning, "There now began a reign of terror in Hispaniola." Spaniards hunted Indians for sport and murdered them for dog food.
- Due to the labor system Columbus created:
  - The Indians couldn't stand it.
  - Pedro de Cordoba wrote in a letter to King Ferdinand in 1517:
  - *"As a result of the sufferings and hard labor they endured, the Indians choose and have chosen suicide. Occasionally a hundred have committed mass suicide. The women, exhausted by labor, have shunned conception and childbirth . . . Many, when pregnant, have taken something to abort and have aborted. Others after delivery have killed their children with their own hands, so as not to leave them in such oppressive slavery."*

- According to Las Casas
- 1/3 of male slaves died during each six- to eight-month mining operation.
- The mines were many miles away from the farms, and the enslaved men and the women only saw each other every eight to ten months.
- This segregation, along with the grueling conditions, took its toll on the native population:
  - Husbands and wives were together only once every eight or ten months and when they met they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides. . . they ceased to procreate.
  - Las Casas... *“As for the newly born, they died early because their mothers, overworked and famished, had no milk to nurse them, and for this reason, while I was in Cuba, 7,000 children died in three months. Some mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation.... In this way, husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk . . . and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile ... was depopulated.... My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature, and now I tremble as I write....”*

## Destroyed the ecosystem

- **Beyond acts of individual cruelty, the Spanish disrupted the Indian ecosystem and culture.**
- **Forcing Indians to work in mines rather than in their gardens led to widespread malnutrition.**
- **Diseases new to the Indians-**
  - **Smallpox: appeared on the island after 1516.**
  - **Indians tried fleeing to Cuba, but the Spanish soon followed them there.**
- **Haiti's pre-Columbian population range- 8,000,000 people.**
- **1496- 3,000,000**
- **By 1516- Slave trade and labor → 12,000**
- **1542- 200 people**
- **1555- 0**



- **Historian Peter Martyr, reporting in 1516 had this to say...**
  - *Packed in below deck, with hatchways closed to prevent their escape, so many slaves died on the trip that "a ship without a compass, chart, or guide, but only following the trail of dead Indians who had been thrown from the ships could find its way from the Bahamas to Hispaniola."*

**Puerto Rico and Cuba were next....**

How did this effect history?

- **Because the Indians died, Indian slavery then led to the massive slave trade the other way across the Atlantic, from Africa. This trade also began on Haiti, initiated by Columbus's son in 1505.**

# Death

- Violent storm on his first return voyage, Columbus, then approximately 41, suffered an attack of what was believed at the time to be gout.
- In later years, he was plagued with the flu and other fevers, bleeding from the eyes, prolonged attacks of gout. Increased in duration and severity, sometimes leaving Columbus bedridden for months at a time, and culminated in his death fourteen years later.
- Based on Columbus' lifestyle and the described symptoms, modern doctors suspect that he suffered from Reiter's Syndrome, rather than gout.
  - Reiter's Syndrome- arthritis, joint inflammation caused by intestinal bacterial infections or from sexually transmitted diseases (primarily chlamydia or gonorrhoea).
  - Most likely → Food poisoning on one of his ocean voyages because of poor sanitation and improper food preparation
- On 20 May 1506, aged probably 54, Columbus died in Valladolid, Spain.

How do you view Christopher Columbus now?