Christopher Columbus Revised: A Case Book and Lesson Plan

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Christopher Columbus Revised: A Casebook and Unit Plan
Casebook and Unit Plan are readily available online at
http://sites.google.com/site/ccrevised/
By Maegan Walsh
To Whom It May Concern:

During the 2010 spring semester at Eastern Illinois University, I have conducted research on Christopher Columbus. I would not have been able to do so without the use of materials available to me at the Booth Library. I used many books about Christopher Columbus, teacher tools from the Ballenger Teacher Center, and plan to use journal articles from the online database for continuation of research. Using the tools readily available to me at the library, I was able to put together a casebook and a unit plan. My casebook consists of ten primary sources and two secondary sources that have each been summarized, cited, and annotated by myself. The unit plan is a constructive approach to teaching about Christopher Columbus with the use of primary sources. The unit plan consists of five lesson plans that utilize the primary and secondary sources – found in the casebook afore mentioned – to teach the subject areas: math, science, reading, and social studies. I have posted all of my work onto a website so that it may be easily accessible to all who wish to access it. My pieces of work can be found at http://sites.google.com/site/ccrevised/. I also plan to continue my studies by researching how teachers teach and what they know about Christopher Columbus. In constructing this continuation of research, I plan to utilize the materials readily accessible to me at the Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University.

Sincerely,

Maegan Walsh

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Hernan Cortés: *Excerpt from Second Letter to Charles V*, (1520)

**Annotation:** In this letter to King Charles V of Spain, in 1520, Hernan Cortes describes, in great detail, the land and the people of Temixtitlan, which is now known as Mexico.

**Summary:** In his letter to the King, Cortes first addresses the lack of information his letter will contain. He claims that the land is so beautiful that no man could ever describe it as perfectly as it is. Tem, now known as Mexico, is described to have rather flat land with multiple water resources, both salt and fresh. When he and his men first came upon it, the city had bridges that Cortes feared would give the people there an advantage to attack and leave Cortés’s men stranded. In order to avoid that, Cortes had brigantines made that were large enough for his troops to cross hastily if need be. He describes the market place as a very busy place, with people selling all sorts of articles, from precious materials to animals killed in game. The people of Tem have all sorts of food and resources. The people also have a building where ten to twelve magistrates are able to solve problems that may arise in the markets.

The city has a large number of temples and homes. The people have a religion that follows many different idols, each representing a different aspect. When Cortes observes this part of their culture in one of the temples, he has the statues of their idols covered up with pictures of Our Lady and the Saints. Moctezuma, the king of the Temixtitlan people, does not agree with this change and argues that if the idols are not fed and given the sacrifices they require, that they will not provide his people with their everyday needs. In response, Cortes informs Moctezuma that there is only one universal Lord. Moctezuma decides that because his people
are not native to the land and have been away from home for a long time, that they must be wrong in their beliefs and that they must follow the Christian ways. Cortes then makes a law that no man can kill another person as a sacrifice, because that is forbidden in the Christian faith.

Cortes continues to describe the city's water and money system, which both sound fairly complex. Cortes is taken back by how much Moctezuma is both respected and feared. Moctezuma receives all that he wants. He is equipped with the finest of gold and silver, and never wears any suit twice, changing his suit four times daily. His palace is equipped with all the entertainment he could desire, such as people of unusual sizes and colors, wild animals, and birds of prey. Towards the end of the excerpt, Cortes describes the complex meal system and the many ceremonies and customs that he observes.
Excerpts from Christopher Columbus’s Journal

Annotation: Excerpts from Christopher Columbus’s journal help to explain what happened during the first voyage. He describes the voyage, the land, and the people in great detail.

Summary: The source provided me with excerpts of Christopher Columbus’s journal from his first voyage. First, Columbus describes why he wants to voyage in search of India by taking the westerly route. First, no one has ever attempted to find India in this route, and, secondly, he will teach them all the Christian ways. He sets sail with 2 other ships. One of the ships has some complications before leaving mainland, but is restored and the ships take off sailing again. They have a tremendously long voyage. After some time, some of the crew members are very doubtful and no longer want to be on the voyage. There are multiple times that the captain lies to his crew members on the distance travelled. They do this in hopes to keep the men motivated. Throughout their travels, Columbus notes all the birds they see. They also come across weeds and crabs in the water. Every time this occurs, the men seem to become more hopeful of finding land. At one point, the men think they have spotted land, but it ends up being a cloud in the distance. Finally, after much time, the men keep finding more and more hints that there is land near. They find different carved tools and red berries, for instance, floating in the waters. One of the men spots land, and is going to be highly rewarded by the king and queen on their arrival back home for being the first to spot land. The men anchor off shore. Columbus describes the people to be “naked” and “poor”. The native people are very friendly and generous to the newcomers. The natives keep coming to the ships to trade cotton and water for different things the ship has. Columbus believes these people are so kind that it will be very easy to make them servants and to teach them the Christian ways. Columbus spots gold on one of the natives and demands they tell him where they got it from. Columbus ends up taking on board some of the
natives as captives to find the island with gold on it. Some escape. Later, other natives approach the boat. Columbus's men take the man on ship, but Columbus tells them to give him goods, not to take his goods, and send him back in order for the man to spread good words of the ships. The ships go from island to island in search of gold, and to acquire water from the locals. His men constantly trade things with the natives. The last island they visit, from the excerpts, has a village, but the people have run off. Columbus orders his men not to take anything from these people's homes, and walks around discovering the land. He often describes the land as beautiful and compares it to summer days from his home land. Then, one of the men from the village approaches them, and Columbus's men give him goods, which delights the native. Columbus wants to find lots of gold and is determined to find the large gold mine that he believes exists.
Syllacio’s Letter

Annotation: Syllacio, the author of the letter, had a friend, Guillermo Coma of Aragon, who had written him many letters. Because his friend was not very scholarly, Syllacio edited and translated them into the following letter, which explains the occurrences of the second voyage, including the description of the land and the people.

Summary: Syllacio describes the voyage preparations. The ship had to stop in the Canaries to get materials and avoid a storm. Later on in the voyage, there is a massive storm and the men are very thankful to have survived it. There are cannibals on the islands. Syllacio describes the islands. There are many useful plants. The homes on the islands are very admired, as they are finely built with steel. The people who live in these homes fought the unwarlike Indians, and are referred to as Caribs. The Caribs are cannibals who openly eat humans, cooking them on spit roasts, and using the bones as tools for their weapons. Caribs have massive bellies, and ride in massive canoes, which are hollowed out logs. The Caribs fatten up their captives to eat them. The women are not very tasteful, so they are used as slaves. When the Caribs have no humans available to eat, they resort to eating dogs. Some Indians were able to flee from the Caribs, and escaped to the Spaniards, begging them to take them aboard. The Spaniards were generous and kind, taking them aboard. There was a battle on land between the Spaniards and some Caribs (the Spaniards were protecting the Indians), where one Spaniard was killed. One Carib was severely wounded, so they threw him into the ocean, but he started to swim back to shore. They captured him again, throwing him out to sea, but he started swimming back again, so they arrowed him to death. The Indians were extremely grateful for the Spaniards. They went to their settlement they left behind from the first voyage. No one responded, so they presumed they were all dead. They were right. They later found out from some natives that
the men died because they had angered the Indians by taking the five women per man for pleasure and labor, so the Indians attacked. Columbus goes to see the king, who he is friendly with. After some discussion, the king agrees to give Columbus his land. Then, Columbus continues to travel in search of land. Any land that he finds, he will use to farm resourceful products to help the survival of the men living on the islands. At the end of the letter, Syllacio describes how the Spaniards discovered Isabella, which will become one of the greatest of cities. The Indians are very happy the Spaniards are there to live, and tell them where there is gold, guiding them to the source.
Columbus’s Letter to Dona Juana de Torres


(Original work published 1500). 289-298.

**Annotation:** The following is a letter to Dona Juana de Torres, written by Christopher Columbus during his voyage back to Spain after Bobadilla locked him up as a prisoner to send him back. Columbus recalls the events of Bobadilla’s arrival and goes into great detail of his innocence.

**Summary:** Columbus begins his letter by praising his faith in the Lord. Without the Lord’s help, he never would have found the new land. He praises the Queen multiple times. He speaks very highly of Isabella, because she decided to fund his journeys to the New World. She never gave up on him. Columbus wanted to conquer all land he could for Her Majesty, even after her recent death. He explains that he had hoped to come across a large amount of pearls in the New World. The absence of notifying the Queen of these pearls was because he wanted to make gold first on the list of business. He claims that despite all his wrong doings, including killings and travails, he still managed to deliver gold back to Spain. When Columbus arrived in Hispaniola, half the island was in rebellion, along with the Indians. He remarks that majority of these people living on the island are criminals. There is a man, Hojeda who makes Columbus very uneasy, so he orders him to leave. In return, Hojeda leaves but threatens Columbus that he will return with many more people to rebel. Many vessels keep appearing on the islands, fluster Columbus. Columbus claims he did not want to harm anyone at all, but one man attacked, trying to kill him, so, in defense, he killed the man. The rebellions were trying to organize an attack against Columbus, but he was trying with all his might to avoid it from happening. He complains of many harmful situations he was in and how he continually asked for help from the King and Queen, with no word in return. There were men stealing the gold that was meant for the King and Queen. While he was away on another part of the land, Comendador Bobadilla arrived, telling the people how he planned to pay them all, issue permits, arrest the Columbus.
brothers, and he proclaimed himself Governor. Columbus is appalled by Bobadilla’s actions and remarks. He argues and tries to disprove all that he said. Bobadilla plots against Columbus and convinces the people of the island to write letters to the King and Queen, requesting to abolish Columbus from the New World. Bobadilla imprisons Columbus and three of his closest men, without letting anyone speak to Columbus. Then Bobadilla steals gold that Columbus had been collecting. Columbus believes that this is all a huge scandal and that he will be found innocent when in front of the King and Queen. Columbus reports massive amounts of gold, and believes the people will realize that he has not done wrong eventually. Columbus concludes by explaining how Bobadilla has stolen every one of his things, including his house. He believes justice will prevail.
Indigenous Painting


Annotation: Provided is a painting done by an Indigenous woman. It represents the meeting of Cortes and Xicotencatl. There are many other fragments of painting, displaying more of the scene.

Summary: The following is a painting done by a native of Tlaxcala. It represents when Cortes first met Xicotencatl. In the far upper left corner, there is a group of men, where two of them are on horses. All of them are carrying lances, and are wearing brightly colored clothing, and some sort of hat. The horses are decorated with bells and colorful harnesses. All of the men seem to be looking at the group of native people in front of them, except one man who has his face turned to the man behind him, as if they were in conversation, or wonderment of what they are seeing or doing. In front of this group of men, a man with instruments and another man with a flag are leading them. Across the center of the page, horizontally, is a path with dark foot prints on them. There is a man in blue in the middle, shaking hands with a scarcely clothed, caped man. I presume the man in the blue is Cortes, where the other man is Xicotencatl. Behind Cortes is a horse, whereas, Xicotencatl has a line of men following him. Cortes has a sword, but the other man has no weapon on him. The two men are trading some sort of object, but the drawing is not very crisp and it is hard to tell what exactly it is. In the bottom, far left corner is two other men, both looking towards the Indian men. One man is on horseback, and the other is walking. They too are both holding lances and wearing colorful clothing. To the right of the man is a woman standing with a red cape/dress on. Her head is tilted up and she is lifting her arms towards the skies. Because of her stature, I would presume that this is Dona Marina, the interpreter
for the Spaniards. Her body is placed so that it seems she would be giving praise, advice, or some sort of speech. To the right of her, in the far bottom right hand corner, are two Indian people. They both have one hand up in front of them, and their other in back of them, facing down. They, like Xicotencatl are scarcely dressed and wearing capes. They are looking directly in front of themselves. Overall, the painting has a slightly unbalanced feature, as there are much more men on the Spaniards side. There seems to be only peaceful gestures.
Antonio de Montesinos’s Sermon
Montesinos, A. *Sermon*. (1511). Retrieved from
http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning_history/spain/spain_montesinos.cfm

**Annotation:** The following is a sermon given by Antonio de Montesinos in 1511 to the Spaniards in the New World.

**Summary:** Antonio de Montesinos starts out by preparing the men in the audience for what they are about to hear. He describes his words as “the strangest, the harshest and hardest, the most terrifying that you ever heard or expected to hear” (Montesinos, Paragraph 1). He warns the men that they have all committed mortal sin. The men have carried out so many horrifying acts towards innocent people. He questions the men how they can be so cruel to people who have been so peaceful and harmless towards them. He wonders why the men did not help these people when they became ill. He challenges the Spaniards by asking if these people are not considered men because the Spaniards did not even give them a chance to turn to the Christian faith. He continually questions their actions towards the innocent people of the land. He ends his sermon powerfully by telling the men that they cannot be saved any more than a man who does not believe in the Christian faith. The sermon was worded to be very powerful, and must have had a shock factor.
The Black Legend
Bartolomé de Las Casas

Casas, B. The Black Legend. (1542). Retrieved from


Annotation: The following is a book excerpt from Bartolomé de las Casas’ book The Black Legend, which was published in 1542. In this excerpt, Casas recalls the brutality towards the natives in 1517, particularly describing the incident in Cholula.

Summary: In this book excerpt, Bartolomé de las Casas describes, in brief, the brutalities that were done unto the indigenous people of New Spain, which is now Mexico. He talks horribly of the Spaniards, claiming they have lost all aspect of religion as they conduct outrageous acts of violence. The Spaniards, in desire of claiming land for the Crown, murdered and stole from the people of the land. Casas claims that the cruel acts only worsened over time.

Casas then goes into detail of one massacre that occurred in Cholula. When the Spaniards, on their expedition, came across this city, all the dignitaries came to greet them. They treated the Spaniards very well, and brought them to their leader’s home. There, the Spaniards decided it was the perfect time to “punish” them. The Spaniards felt the need to make examples of the people they came across in order to provoke fear from the surrounding cities. In doing so, the Spaniards invited all the leaders and dignitaries to meet with them. They asked them to bring with them five or six thousand native bearers. When the leaders went into the building, they were instantly killed, without the people outside having any knowledge of the sort. All the people that came with them were mustered into the courtyards. Then the Spaniards covered all exits and massacred every one of them using their swords and lances. No one escaped. On their way to Mexico City, the king Montezuma showered them with gifts. They were then greeted by Montezuma’s brother with gold and silver. That very
same day, the Spaniards tricked the king Montezuma to meet them, where they then seized and
cuffed him.

Casas sums up his ideas by proclaiming that what the Spaniards had done in order to conquer
the land was absolutely wrong on their parts. The King had told them to gain territory, but in no way
did he say to do it by massacring or enslaving many people. He also goes on to say that whenever any
native did not fall for the claims stated by such “bestial individuals” (Casas, Paragraph 5), that they
were said to be rebelling against the King.
Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda

Sepulveda, J. *The Second Democrats*. (1547). Retrieved from

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning_history/spain/spain_sepulveda.cfm

Annotation: In this excerpt from his tract, written in 1547, The Second Democrats, Sepulveda argues the wrong doings of the Indians, attempting to justify all acts of cruelty done unto them.

Summary: In this excerpt, Juan Gines de Sepulveda argues that Indians have no souls and deserve to be enslaved. It is natural law that one person rule over another, just as a mother is above her child. In saying that, the Indians would be lucky to have the Spaniards, who are civilized, wise, and full of religion, rule them. The Indians lack any form of civilization and need all the help they can get. These Indians make war on each other, mercilessly eating their victims after victory. They lack any form of education, money system, or hierarchy. They are fearful “like women” (Sepulveda, paragraph 2) and scatter from only a small amount of Spaniards. The Aztecs claim to have the most civilized ways of the New World, but Sepulveda argues this as well. Their way of living is completely wrong, because they live in a life of servitude to a king that is not born into the role, but chosen by the people. They give all that they have to the king, and do not own a single thing for themselves. They do not even control their wills; the king does. They worship the Devil, and offer human hearts to satisfy their idols, then eating the sacrificed bodies. The Indians are horrible people for sacrificing innocent people, which gives right to strike war upon them. It is the Spaniards duty to correct such evil and malicious ways of life.
Personal Account, Bernal Díaz del Castillo


Annotation: In this excerpt of his book The Discover and Conquest of Mexico, Díaz del Castillo recalls the meeting with the Tabasco

Summary: When Bernal Díaz del Castillo and the rest of Cortés’s men came upon Tabasco, they were offered many priceless objects. Also, the Indians offered many women; among those was the beautiful Dona Marina, who was called that because she was a turned Christian. Cortes was very happy with this gift and thanked the Indians. He then requests they have all the people, women and children included, return to the village, as a sign of peace. Also, he requested that they stop worshipping the Idols and turn to the Christian faith, showing them pictures of Mother Mary and the Saints. The Indians replied very positively and asked that the pictures be hung up in their place of worship. Later, Cortes found out that the reasoning for some of the previous attacks from the Indians was because their translator had escaped and told them they should. Cortés’s men searched for the man, but the Indians had already sacrificed him. The Cacique spoke of land unknown to the men, called “Mexico”. Cortes convinced many of the Caciques to come to the newly formed church, where there was an elaborate church gathering. Afterwards, the men departed on the ship, where the men pointed out all the different places they knew on the islands.

Díaz del Castillo goes into detail about Dona Marina’s life. She was given away by her parents, who claimed she had mysteriously died. The Tabasco people, who received her, then gave her to Cortes. From then on, Cortes adored her, and took her everywhere he went, as she was a very useful interpreter and was respected by all the Indians. She came upon her family later and forgave them for
giving her away. She said she was grateful for the life that she had, because she now was a Christian, was a mother of Cortés's child, and a wife to another Spaniard. At the end of this excerpt, Díaz del Castillo concludes that much of the expedition would not have been done without the help of Doña Marina.
Annotation: Throughout his letter, Cuneo answers specific questions someone must have asked him prior the trip. He describes his voyage, the land, the resources, and the people.

Summary: Cuneo describes the voyage overseas to the Americas. Once there, they take 12 teenage girls and two boys and send them to Spain to be enslaved. A canoe follows the ship and shoots at the men aboard. The Spaniards fight back. One Indian boy is severely wounded, so they throw him overboard. He continues to swim, so they take him on board and behead him. Cuneo takes one of the women to have pleasure with. She refuses violently, so he whips her multiple times until she agrees to let him have his way with her. Her and the others captured that day were sent to Spain to become enslaved. They went to find the settlement of men they had left behind from the previous voyage, only to find them all dead, with their eyes gorged out. The Indians had eaten their eyes. The chief of the tribe told Columbus that another tribe had come down and killed all his men. Columbus took his word and continued on. Indians approach the Spaniards, giving them gold and telling them where to find more. The Indians take the men, helping them to cross the rivers and carry their belongings. Later on, some men make secret trades with the Indians for gold, only to be whipped and/or slit at the ears and nose, because it is against the contract. Cuneo goes into great detail of the different plants and their uses. He mentions certain ones could be used for remedies, and explains how Indians do not use remedies and die weak. They brought some seeds back to Spain to test out what plants would succeed there. There aren’t many animals found in the New World, so the Spaniards bring them over with them. He then goes on to describe the people in detail. The Indians are olive tones, flat faced, thick skinned, and tattooed. Women give birth easily, with rapid recovery. Nude women cover up their privates in the presence of men. There are distant, numerous groups of Indians. There are Indians and Caribs; the Caribs eat the Indians. Indians procreate rapidly, so it is important that the
Caribs eat the Indians, in order to control overpopulation. They use canoes, which are hollowed out trees. The Indians and Caribs both believe in different idols that mean different things. He then describes how him and Columbus travel to find mainland. Throughout the way, they encounter Indians who, after some conflict due to misunderstanding, tell the men where they can find gold. The men search for the land where the gold is but cannot find it, returning back to their settlement. Some men are going hungry and falling ill, but luckily a ship from Spain arrives with provisions.
Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States: 1942-present

Chapter One


Annotation: Zinn's Chapter reflects the voyages to the Americas. He tells the story from the victims rather than the victors. He uses multiple primary sources to tell the story and reassures the reader that all historians have bias.

Summary: Zinn starts off by explaining Columbus's voyage to the Americas. Upon the arrival of the Spaniards in the New World, Columbus instantly wants to find gold and capture the natives to become slaves. Spain had recently unified and was in desperate need of gold, which is why the King and Queen of Spain decided to finance Columbus's travels. They promised to give him 10% of the profits, make him governor of the found lands and name him Admiral of the Ocean Sea. Columbus was not even the first to spot land, but claimed he did in order to receive the reward from the King and Queen. When the natives greet Columbus, they are very generous and aid the Spaniards in all their needs. The Spaniards take advantage of their generosity. Soon, Columbus starts capturing the natives in hopes they will lead him to fields and mines of gold. Any native that refuses or resists in the slightest is killed. He returns to Spain, leaving some men behind to search for Gold, and exaggerates his findings in hopes to be funded again for another voyage. He returns to the New World to find that the men he left behind were all killed by the natives, after the Spaniards had enslaved them and used the women and children as slaves for sex and labor. His want for gold became so extreme that he began to cut off the hands of those that did not bring him gold. Gold was nowhere to be
found, and those who tried to escape the brutalities of Columbus were hunted down and killed. Bartolome de las Casas was a critic of the cruelty. He wrote many books to describe the brutalities done to the natives. Casas claims that the brutalities are so severe that he believes no future generation will ever believe that anything of the sort ever took place. He even mentions that the “so-called Christians” would knife the natives for fun and ride them like horses when they became tired. The cruelties against the people led to massacres, famished peoples and many suicides. Women even killed their children so that they would not have to bear the cruelty of the Spaniards.

One historian describes the acts to be genocide, but then continues to romanticize Columbus. Zinn points out that many historians, like mapmakers, often distort the information at hand. The only difference is that a mapmaker’s distortion is technical, where a historian’s is ideological, where some aspects might influence the writings. Zinn also argues that most history is looked at from the executioner’s point of view, and that he will be taking the victims view points. He continues to tell of Cortez and how he came to the Aztec’s, where he was warmly welcomed, because they believed him to be a returning god. He quickly took their misconceptions and twisted them, taking full advantage of their ignorance, and turning the tribes against each other. Soon, many were dead from battles and massacres. Another voyager, Pizarro, also used violence against the natives. In North America, Puritans treated the natives horribly, forcefully capturing their lands, and killing off many of them. Overall, many voyagers were extremely cruel to the natives.

Zinn points out that many historians remark that such cruelties were necessary for the human progress. Then he explains that Spain was even further impoverished after the voyages than they were before. He also goes on to question why the Spaniards thought they were better than the natives. When analyzing the natives, it is seen that they were such a great society, full of love, peace,
and harmony. They had complex languages and shared everything with no individual ownership. They were part of the agricultural revolution. The European ways were so entirely different than those of the natives. The natives believed that the invaders should take custom to the ways of the people of the lands. He ends by re-emphasizing the fact that so many historians focus on the outcomes, and often leave out the fact that masses of people were annihilated.
Annotation: The following is an excerpt from a grade school social studies book. It describes, in brief, the different voyages and people who influenced the European travels to the Americas.

Summary: Spaniards were the first Europeans to reach the Americas. The Spanish rulers sent explorers to adventure the lands, both North and South America, in search of gold and lands for settlement. Because the explorers had such a large desire for gold and land, they became known as conquistadors, which is the Spanish word for “conquerors”. Missionaries also went to spread the Christian faith. There were many conquistadors mentioned in the book excerpt. Hernando Cortes, in 1519 went to, what is today known as Mexico, where he came across the capital of the rich Aztec Empire. The ruler, Motecuhzoma, was very welcoming to them, but two years later, Cortes’s army completely destroyed the Aztec civilization. Francisco Pizarro, in 1531, destroyed the Inca Empire. In 1513, Juan Ponce de Leon claimed a part of what is now Florida for Spain. Hernando de Soto and Francisco Vasquez de Coronado also travelled much of what is now the U.S., claiming more lands for Spain. They both failed in finding any gold. Mexico was once called New Spain, which was Spain’s first colony. Many Spanish colonists had plantations and mines. Because they needed workers, they enslaved Indians. Much of the Indians had already died from fighting the Spanish, leaving very few to become workers. The Indians left to become workers, became very fatigued and died of many different diseases. Soon, Colonists were in high desire of slaves, and resorted to capturing people from Africa and bringing them back to New Spain as slaves.