ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** ~~11B2~~11B2PBA

Evidence Statements : ~~RH1, RH6, RH9~~RH1.6; RH6.4; RH9.5

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s):

Christopher Columbus Journal
What Became of the Taino?
Columbus Reports on His First Voyage

Please write the complete item in the box below:

You have read "What Became of the Tai'no People?", "Christopher Columbus Journal," and "Columbus Reports on His First Voyage."

~~Columbus provides two different descriptions of his first encounter with the Taino people in his journal entry and his letter written to the king and queen of Spain.~~

Compare the depiction of the Tai'no people in each document. Then, write an essay evaluating and explaining how the different viewpoints reflect the purpose of each piece. Be sure to cite specific evidence from each document.

~~Compare Columbus's depiction of the Taino people to the depiction presented by the Smithsonian journalist.~~

~~Using specific evidence from the texts, evaluate the author's differing points of view regarding the Taino people, noting discrepancies between the sources.~~

~~Explain which author provides a more credible depiction of the Taino people and why citing specific evidence from the texts.~~

Please provide the correct response below:

Click here to enter text.

Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

This prompt has many good elements. Be specific in the task the student is to perform. There is no mention of the form the writing should take (essay, letter, etc.), and while some students can work without the form identified, there are those who need (or prefer) more specificity. Also, streamline the prompt so that it is concise.

Also, there are very few items in the set that illicit information related to the author's point of view and instead there are several items on central idea. Go back through all the items to ensure that they draw out ideas and evidence students can use in their written response.

Item checked for:

x☐ Bias & Sensitivity x☐ Style x☐ Answer Accuracy x☐ Evidence Statement x☐ Task Type

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☐ Accept x☐ Accept with Edits ☐ Reject

ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** ~~11B2~~11B2PBA

Evidence Statements : ~~RI1, vocabulary (ID evidence statement for vocabulary)~~RI1.1; RH4.1

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s): Christopher Columbus Journal

Please write the complete item in the box below:

Part A:

What is the meaning of the word ~~acquainted~~ ingenious as it is used in the passage?

a. ~~familiar~~simple
b. ~~instructed~~clever
c. ~~interested~~surprised
d. ~~skilled~~concerned

Part B:

Which of the phrases from the excerpt helps the reader understand the meaning of ingenious~~acquainted~~?

a. "...they were very friendly to us...~~Some paint the face...~~"
b. "They are all of a good size and stature..."
c. "...they defended themselves."
~~b. "...I showed them swords..."~~
~~c. "...cut themselves through ignorance"~~
d. "They very quickly learn...~~They are all of a good size...~~"

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Please provide the correct response below:

Part A:

b. clever
~~a. familiar~~

Part B:

d. "They very quickly learn..."
~~c. "cut themselves through ignorance"~~

Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

The ES and standards for vocabulary are listed on their own page for each grade level. Please access that page and choose the vocabulary ES that fits with this item.

Item checked for:

☒ Bias & Sensitivity ☒ Style ☒ Answer Accuracy ☒ Evidence Statement ☒ Task Type

☐ Accept ☒ Accept with Edits ☐ Reject

ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** ~~11B2~~11B2PBA

Evidence Statements : ~~RH5~~RH1.6 ;RH5.3

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s): Christopher Columbus Journal

Please write the complete item in the box below:

Part A:

In the latter section of Columbus' journal, he shifted from reporting general observations to directly quoting. What is the effect of Columbus' use of direct quotation in this passage?

a. It prevents the reader from creating their own interpretation.
b. It contradicts the information presented earlier in the document.
c. It ~~gives~~ ensures the reader is getting an unbiased ~~the reader the true~~ account of the event.
d. It ~~allows~~ provides for the inclusion of the speaker's interpretation of events.

Part B:
Which of the statements below best illustrates the effect of Columbus' use of direct quotation?

~~a. "As I saw that they were friendly to us...and became wonderfully attached to us." "The Admiral directed them to keep a strict watch upon the forecastle and look out diligently for land."~~
a. "I presented them with some red caps, and strings of beads to wear upon the neck..."
b. "...they were much delighted, and became wonderfully attached..."
~~b.~~c. ~~"They saw trees very green many streams of water, and diverse sorts of fruit.~~Some paint the face, and some the whole body..."
~~c. "As I saw that they were friendly to us...and became wonderfully attached to us."~~
d. "...I showed them swords which they grasped by the blades, and cut themselves...~~They are all of a good size and stature and handsomely formed.~~"

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Please provide the correct response below:

Part A:

d. It ~~allows~~ provides for the inclusion of the speaker's interpretation of events.

Part B:

bc. "...they were much delighted, and became wonderfully attached..." ~~"As I saw that they were friendly to us...and became wonderfully attached to us."~~

Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

Add in whichever ES that is tied to RH or RI1. Some distractors need to be more plausible, based on the passage. The correct answer for Part B is an outlier.

Item checked for:

~~☐~~x Bias & Sensitivity ~~☐~~x Style x☐ Answer Accuracy x☐ Evidence Statement x☐ Task Type

☐ Accept x☐ Accept with Edits ☐ Reject

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ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** ~~11B2~~11B2PBA

Evidence Statements : ~~RI1 plus vocabulary (include the #)~~RH1.6 ; RH3.8

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s):

~~Christopher Columbus's Journal~~Columbus Reports on His First Voyage, 1493
Christopher Columbus Journal

Please write the complete item in the box below:

Part A:

In Columbus's letter to the king and queen he describes the value of the land, while in his journal he provides a detailed description of the people. Why does Columbus have a different focus in each excerpt?

~~What is the central idea of the passage?~~

a. ~~The island of Guanahani contained many plant and animal species that were unknown to Columbus' crew~~Columbus doesn't think the land is important.
b. Columbus hopes to make money from his voyage.
~~b. The appearance and fighting style of the local inhabitants frightened Columbus's crew.~~
c. ~~Columbus's crew landed on the island of Guanahani and experienced a peaceful first encounter with the local inhabitants~~Columbus doesn't think the people are important.
d. ~~The lack of cooperation among Columbus's crew made it difficult to complete the voyage~~Columbus wants to make his discovery more appealing to the king and queen.

Part B:

Highlight two sentences or phrases from each of the two passages that supports~~Which of the statements below best illustrates the central idea~~ the answer to part A?

~~a. "...the Admiral directed them to keep a strict watch upon the forecastle and look out diligently for land..."~~
~~b. "...they saw trees very green many streams of water, and diverse sorts of fruits."~~
~~c. "As I saw that they were friendly to us...and became wonderfully attached to us."~~
~~d. "They are all of a good size and stature, and handsomely formed."~~

Please provide the correct response below:

~~a.~~ ~~Part A:~~

d. Columbus wants to make his discovery more appealing to the king and queen.

~~c. Columbus's crew landed on the island of Guanahani and experienced a peaceful first encounter with the local inhabitants.~~

Part B:

Possible correct answers from each passage:

~~c. "As I saw that they were friendly to us...and became wonderfully attached to us."~~

"Columbus Reports on His First Voyage, 1493"

- "Besides, this *Hispana* abounds in various kinds of species, gold and metals."
- "But when they see that they are safe, and all fear is banished, they are very guileless and honest, and very liberal of all they have."
- "The island called Juana, as well as the others in its neighborhood, is exceedingly fertile."
- "The convenience of the harbors in this island, and the excellence of the rivers, in volume and salubrity, surpass human belief, unless on should see them."

"Christopher Columbus Journal"

- "...besides the reward which the King and Queen had offered, which was an annuity of ten thousand maravedis."
- "to bear witness that he before all others took possession (as in fact he did) of that island for the King and Queen his sovereigns"

Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

Add in the ~~RH or RI1 ES. Make sure all distractors are plausible and represent possible misreadings by~~ students.
Added standards and ES; completely changed question to meet the standard that had not yet been addressed in the set (RH3).

Item checked for:

~~☐~~x Bias & Sensitivity ~~☐~~x Style ~~☐~~x Answer Accuracy ~~☐~~x Evidence Statement ~~☐~~x Task Type

☐ Accept ~~☐~~x Accept with Edits ☐ Reject

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ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** ~~11B2~~11B2PBA

Evidence Statements : ~~RI1 plus vocabulary (include the #)~~RI1.2; RH4.1

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s):

What Became of the Taino?

Please write the complete item in the box below:

Part A:
What is the meaning of the word *indigenous* as used in the passage?

a. foreign
b. hostile
c. local
d. ~~powerful~~naive

Part B:
Which of the following statements from the passage helps the reader understand the meaning of *indigenous*?

a. "Their world, which had its origins among the Arawak tribes of the Orinoco Delta, gradually spread..."
b. "Columbus established the first American colony at La Isabela..."
c. "Spaniards removed men from villages to work in gold mines and colonial plantations."
d. "...took on Creole characteristics with the arrival of the African slaves in the 16th century."

Please provide the correct response below:

Part A:

c. local

Part B:

a. "Their world, which had its origins among the Arawak tribes of the Orinoco Delta, gradually spread."

Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

Add in the vocabulary ES.

Item checked for:

☐x Bias & Sensitivity x☐ Style ☐x Answer Accuracy x☐ Evidence Statement x☐ Task Type

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☐ Accept ☐x Accept with Edits ☐ Reject

ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** ~~11B2~~11B2PBA

Evidence Statements : ~~RH5~~RH1.6 ; RI5.1

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s): What Became of the Taino?

Please write the complete item in the box below:

Part A:

How does the information in paragraphs 1-4 contribute to an overall understanding of the Taino people?

~~How would the removal of paragraphs 1-4 change the understanding of the Taino people?~~

a. It ~~would~~ presents the Taino as a weak and inferior society.
b. It ~~would~~ presents the Taino as an aggressive and warlike society.
c. It ~~would~~ presents the Taino as an independent and successful~~highly advanced civilization~~society.
d. It ~~would~~ presents the Taino as a religious and educated society~~important military leaders in their region~~.

Part B:

Which two phrases from the passage best support the answer to Part A?

~~Which of the statements below, from the first four paragraphs, best illustrates the Taino culture?~~

a. "Their world...gradually spread from Venezuela across the Antilles in waves of voyaging."
b. "They cultivated yucca, sweet potatoes, maize, beans and other crops as their culture flourished."
c. "...the Taino towns described by Spanish chroniclers were densely settled~~, well organized and widely dispersed~~...."
d. "...The Taino never developed a written language..."
e. "...they made exquisite pottery, wove intricate belts from dyed cotton and carved enigmatic images from wood, stone, shell and bone."
~~d.~~f. "The Taino impressed Columbus with their generosity, which may have contributed to their undoing."

Please provide the correct response below:

Part A:

c. It presents the Taino as an independent and successful society.

~~a. It would present the Taino as weak and inferior.~~

Part B:

a. "Their world...gradually spread from Venezuela across the Antilles in waves of voyaging."

b. "They cultivated yucca, sweet potatoes, maize, beans and other crops as their culture flourished."

~~c. "...the Taino towns described by Spanish chroniclers were densely settled, well-organized and widely dispersed."~~

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Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

Focus more tightly on the text. Suggested change to Part A: How does the information in paragraphs 1-4 contribute to an overall understanding of the Taino people? Part B should focus more on the evidence to support the answer to Part A. Here is a possible revision: Which two phrases from the passage best support the answer to Part A?

We cannot decide about the correct second standard. We used RI5. 1; RH5.1 works except for the fact that this piece is NOT a primary source.

Item checked for:

~~☐~~x Bias & Sensitivity x☐ Style x☐ Answer Accuracy x☐ Evidence Statement x☐ Task Type

☐ Accept ~~☐~~x Accept with Edits ☐ Reject

ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** ~~11B2~~11B2PBA

Evidence Statements : ~~RI1 (add vocab ES)~~RI1.1 ; RH4.1

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s): Columbus Reports on His First Voyage

Please write the complete item in the box below:

Part A:

What is the meaning of the word destitute as used in the passage?

a. awkward
b. flourishing
c. ~~impoverished~~dispossessed
d. prosperous

Part B:

Which of the following phrases from the passage helps the reader understand the meaning of destitute?

a. ~~lack~~ "unprovided with any sort of iron~~of weapons~~"
b. "timid and full of terror"
c. "guileless and honest"
d. "inclined to love"

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Please provide the correct response below:

Part A:

c. ~~impoverished~~dispossessed

Part B:

a. "unprovided with any sort of iron"

~~a.~~ ~~lack of weapons~~

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Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

One of the options for Part B is presented as a different part of speech as the others (lack of weapons). Revise option A (the key).

Item checked for:

x☐ Bias & Sensitivity x☐ Style x☐ Answer Accuracy x☐ Evidence Statement x☐ Task Type

☐ Accept x☐ Accept with Edits ☐ Reject

ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** ~~11B2~~11B2PBA

Evidence Statements : ~~RH2~~RI1.2 ; RH2.4

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s):

Columbus Reports on His First Voyage

Please write the complete item in the box below:

Part A:

What is the central idea of ~~the~~ Columbus's ~~passage~~letter to Ferdinand and Isabella included in the passage?In the passage, Columbus reports on his first voyage. What is the central idea of his letter to Ferdinand and Isabella?

a. The island of Hispana is desolate, but the people are kind.
b. The discovery of Hispana is beneficial for Spain.
c. Hispana is a treacherous land and the inhabitants are warlike.
d. Finding Hispana proved more costly than beneficial to the Spanish.
e. ~~The discovery of Hispana is beneficial for Spain.~~

Part B:

Which of the following statements from the passage best illustrates the central idea of the passage?

a. "It has numerous harbors on all sides, very safe and wide..."
b. "...they are very guileless and honest..."
c. "No one refuses the asker anything that he possesses..."
d. "...that they might be eager to search for and gather and give to use what they abound in and we greatly need..."

Please provide the correct response below:

Part A:

b. ~~d.~~ The discovery of Hispana is beneficial for Spain.

Part B:

d. "...that they might be eager to search for and gather and give to use what they abound in and we greatly need..."

Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

Add RI or RH 1 ES.
Added missing ES.

Item checked for:

☒ Bias & Sensitivity ☒ Style ☒ Answer Accuracy ☒ Evidence Statement ☒ Task Type

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☒ Accept ☐ Accept with Edits ☐ Reject

ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** 11B2

Evidence Statements : ~~RH5~~RH1.2; RH5.1

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s):

Columbus Reports on His First Voyage

Please write the complete item in the box below:

Part A:
How does the information provided in the introduction impact the understanding of Columbus's letter?

a. The introduction explains the necessity and purpose of Columbus's letter.
b. The introduction provides evidence that validates Columbus's reporting of events.
c. The introduction describes how Europeans supported Columbus' discovery.
d. The introduction explains how Columbus used the funds provided by Spain or the expedition.

Part B:
Which of the following statements from the passage best illustrates the impact of the introduction to Columbus's letter?

a. "He left thirty-nine men to build a settlement called La Navidad in present-day Haiti."
b. "Columbus brought back small amounts of gold as well as native birds and plants..."
c. "The letter was written in Spanish and sent to Rome."
d. "The Latin printing of this letter announced the existence of the American continent throughout Europe.

Please provide the correct response below:

Part A:

a. The introduction explains the necessity and purpose of Columbus's letter.

Part B:

d. "The Latin printing of this letter announced the existence of the American continent throughout Europe."

Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

Add RI or RH 1 ES.
Part A is not very rigorous; Part B is not really related to Part A.

Item checked for:

☐ Bias & Sensitivity ☐ Style ☐ Answer Accuracy ☐ Evidence Statement ☐ Task Type

☐ Accept ☐ Accept with Edits ☐x Reject

ADE Summer Item Writing Institute

ELA/Literacy

Performance-Based Assessment

Name: 11 Social Studies

Date: 6/12/2013

Grade: 11 **Task Model:** ~~11B~~2~~11~~B2PBA

Evidence Statements : ~~RH2~~RH1. ; RH2.

Genre:

☐Literary Analysis ☐Narrative ☐Informational ☐Science/Technical ☒Social Science/History

Title of Passage(s): ~~Christopher Columbus Journal~~What Became of the Tai'no People?

Please write the complete item in the box below:

Part A:
What is the central idea of the passage?

a. The Taino people had a rich and diverse culture that Columbus admired ~~The culture of the Taino people changed greatly after the arrival of Columbus and their influence is still evident~~ today.
b. The Taino people worked collaboratively with Columbus and both cultures benefited from the mutual exchange of ideas.
c. The culture of the Taino people changed greatly after the arrival of Columbus and their influence is still evident today. ~~The Taino people learned how to be better warriors after the arrival of Columbus due to the incorporation of Spanish technology.~~
d. After a brief period of coexistence, relations between the newcomers and natives deteriorated.~~The Taino people fought aggressively to defend their land and possessions from Columbus which eventually led to the extinction of the Taino people.~~

Part B:
Which of the statements below best illustrates the central idea?

a. "If you have ever paddled a canoe, napped in a hammock, savored a barbecue, ...tracked a hurricane across Cuba, you have paid tribute to the Taino.."
~~a. "The Indians were inventive people who learned to strain cyanide from life-giving yucca, developed pepper gas for warfare..."~~
b. "..They made exquisite potter, wove intricate belts from dyed cotton and carved enigmatic images from wood, stone, shell and bone."
c. "The Taino impressed Columbus with their generosity, which may have contributed to their undoing."
~~b.~~d. "...hundreds fell in fighting with the Spaniards while untold numbers fled to remote regions beyond colonial control."
~~c.~~e. ~~"...many Taino women married conquistadors, combining the genes of the New World and the Old World to create a new Mestizo population...elements of their culture endure..."~~
f. "Their regional chieftancies, each headed by a leader known as a Cacuque, crumbled away."
~~d.~~g. "...Yet five centuries after the Indians' fateful metting with Columbus, elements of their culture

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Please provide the correct response below:

Part A:

~~a.~~c. The culture of the Taino people changed greatly after the arrival of Columbus and their influence is still evident today.

Part B:

a. "If you have ever paddled a canoe, napped in a hammock, savored a barbecue, ...tracked a hurricane across Cuba, you have paid tribute to the Taino

g. "Yet five centuries after the Indians' fateful meeting with Columbus, ~~...many Taino women married conquistadors, combining the genes of the New World and the Old World to create a new Mestizo population...~~elements of their culture endure."

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Comments/Recommendations/Feedback/Information about passages or items:

Add in whichever ES that is tied to RH or RI1. The correct response for Part B is a bit of a problem. It is not a good idea to combine two statements that are not near each other in the actual text. Also, the first statement for option C is not the best support for Part A. Consider having students identify two statements rather than one for Part B. Make sure there are six options total.

Item checked for:

☐x Bias & Sensitivity ☐x Style ☐x Answer Accuracy x☐ Evidence Statement x☐ Task Type

☐ Accept x☐ Accept with Edits ☐ Reject

Christopher Columbus Journal (history-world.org)
Grade: 11
SR:12.6/Lexile: 1340
Text Complexity:
Word Count: 1032

Thursday, 11 October. Steered west-southwest; and encountered a heavier sea than they had met with before in the whole voyage. Saw pardelas and a green rush near the vessel. The crew of the Pinta saw a cane and a log; they also picked up a stick which appeared to have been carved with an iron tool, a piece of cane, a plant which grows on land, and a board. The crew of the Nina saw other signs of land, and a stalk loaded with rose berries. These signs encouraged them, and they all grew cheerful. Sailed this day till sunset, twenty-seven leagues.

After sunset steered their original course west and sailed twelve miles an hour till two hours after midnight, going ninety miles, which are twenty-two leagues and a half; and as the Pinta was the swiftest sailer, and kept ahead of the Admiral, she discovered land and made the signals which had been ordered.

The land was first seen by a sailor called Rodrigo de Triana, although the Admiral at ten o'clock that evening standing on the quarter-deck saw a light, but so small a body that he could not affirm it to be land; calling to Pero Gutierrez, groom of the King's wardrobe, he told him he saw a light, and bid him look that way, which he did and saw it; he did the same to Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, whom the King and Queen had sent with the squadron as comptroller, but he was unable to see it from his situation. The Admiral again perceived it once or twice, appearing like the light of a wax candle moving up and down, which some thought an indication of land. But the Admiral held it for certain that land was near; for which reason, after they had said the Salve which the seamen are accustomed to repeat and chant after their fashion, the Admiral directed them to keep a strict watch upon the forecastle and look out diligently for land, and to him who should first discover it he promised a silken jacket, besides the reward which the King and Queen had offered, which was an annuity of ten thousand maravedis.

At two o'clock in the morning the land was discovered, at two leagues' distance; they took in sail and remained under the square-sail lying to till day, which was Friday, when they found themselves near a small island, one of the Lucayos, called in the Indian language Guanahani. Presently they descried people, naked, and the Admiral landed in the boat, which was armed, along with Martin Alonzo Pinzon, and Vincent Yanez his brother, captain of the Nina. The Admiral bore the royal standard, and the two captains each a banner of the Green Cross, which all the ships had carried; this contained the initials of the names of the King and Queen each side of the cross, and a crown over each letter Arrived on shore, they saw trees very green many streams of water, and diverse sorts of fruits.

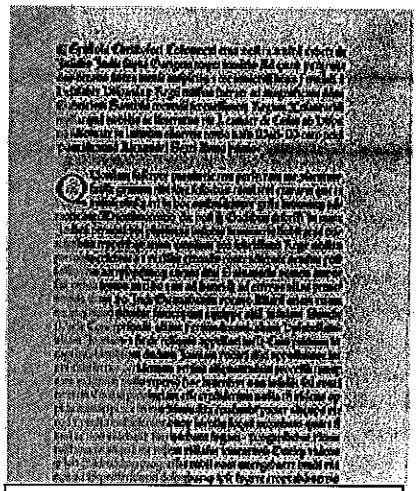
The Admiral called upon the two Captains, and the rest of the crew who landed, as also to Rodrigo de Escovedo notary of the fleet, and Rodrigo Sanchez, of Segovia, to bear witness that he before all others took possession (as in fact he did) of that island for the King and Queen his sovereigns, making the requisite declarations, which are more at large set down here in writing. Numbers of the people of the island straightway collected together.

Here follow the precise words of the Admiral: "As I saw that they were very friendly to us, and perceived that they could be much more easily converted to our holy faith by gentle means than by force, I presented them with some red caps, and strings of beads to wear upon the neck, and many other trifles of small value, wherewith they were much delighted, and became wonderfully attached to us. Afterwards they came swimming to the boats, bringing parrots, balls of cotton thread, javelins, and many other things which they exchanged for articles we gave them, such as glass beads, and hawk's bells; which trade was carried on with the utmost good will. But they seemed on the whole to me, to be a very poor people. They all go completely naked, even the women, though I saw but one girl. All whom I saw were young, not above thirty years of age, well made, with fine shapes and faces; their hair short, and coarse like that of a horse's tail, combed toward the forehead, except a small portion which they suffer to hang down behind, and never cut. Some paint themselves with black, which makes them appear like those of the Canaries, neither black nor white; others with white, others with red, and others with such colors as they can find. Some paint the face, and some the whole body; others only the eyes, and others the nose. Weapons they have none, nor are acquainted with them, for I showed them swords which they grasped by the blades, and cut themselves through ignorance. They have no iron, their javelins being without it, and nothing more than sticks, though some have fish-bones or other things at the ends. They are all of a good size and stature, and handsomely formed. I saw some with scars of wounds upon their bodies, and demanded by signs the of them; they answered me in the same way, that there came people from the other islands in the neighborhood who endeavored to make prisoners of them, and they defended themselves. I thought then, and still believe, that these were from the continent. It appears to me, that the people are ingenious, and would be good servants and I am of opinion that they would very readily become Christians, as they appear to have no religion. They very quickly learn such words as are spoken to them. If it please our Lord, I intend at my return to carry home six of them to your Highnesses, that they may learn our language. I saw no beasts in the island, nor any sort of animals except parrots."

These are the words of the Admiral.

Columbus Reports on His First Voyage, 1493 (Gilder Lehrman)
Grade: 11
SR:10.7/Lexile:1180
Text Complexity: Readily Accessible
Word Count: 812

Columbus reports on his first voyage, 1493



Christopher Columbus' letter to Ferdinand and Isabella, 1493. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)

On August 3, 1492, Columbus set sail from Spain to find an all-water route to Asia. On October 12, more than two months later, Columbus landed on an island in the Bahamas that he called San Salvador; the natives called it Guanahani.

For nearly five months, Columbus explored the Caribbean, particularly the islands of Juana (Cuba) and Hispaniola (San Domingo), before returning to Spain. He left thirty-nine men to build a settlement called La Navidad in present-day Haiti. He also kidnapped several Native Americans (between ten and twenty-five) to take back to Spain—only eight survived. Columbus brought back small amounts of gold as well as native birds and plants to show the richness of the continent he believed to be India.

When Columbus arrived back in Spain on March 15, 1493, he immediately wrote a letter announcing his discoveries to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, who had helped finance his trip. The letter was written in Spanish and sent to Rome, where it was printed in Latin by Stephan Plannck. Plannck mistakenly left Queen Isabella's name out of the pamphlet's introduction but quickly realized his error and reprinted the pamphlet a few days later. The copy shown here is the second, corrected edition of the pamphlet.

The Latin printing of this letter announced the existence of the American continent throughout Europe. "I discovered many islands inhabited by numerous people. I took possession of all of them for our most fortunate King by making public proclamation and unfurling his standard, no one making any resistance," Columbus wrote.

In addition to announcing his momentous discovery, Columbus's letter also provides observations of the native people's culture and lack of weapons, noting that "they are destitute of arms, which are entirely unknown to them, and for which they are not adapted; not on account of any bodily deformity, for they are well made, but because they are timid and full of terror." Writing that the natives are "fearful and timid . . . guileless and honest," Columbus declares that the land could easily be conquered by Spain, and the natives "might become Christians and inclined to love our King and Queen and Princes and all the people of Spain."

Excerpt from Letter

I have determined to write you this letter to inform you of everything that has been done and discovered in this voyage of mine.

On the thirty-third day after leaving Cadiz I came into the Indian Sea, where I discovered many islands inhabited by numerous people. I took possession of all of them for our most fortunate King by making public proclamation and unfurling his standard, no one making any resistance. The island called Juana, as well as the others in its neighborhood, is exceedingly fertile. It has numerous harbors on all sides, very safe and wide, above comparison with any I have ever seen. Through it flow many very broad and health-giving rivers; and there are in it numerous very lofty mountains. All these island are very beautiful, and of quite different shapes; easy to be traversed, and full of the greatest variety of trees reaching to the stars. . . .

In the island, which I have said before was called *Hispana*, there are very lofty and beautiful mountains, great farms, groves and fields, most fertile both for cultivation and for pasturage, and well adapted for constructing buildings. The convenience of the harbors in this island, and the excellence of the rivers, in volume and salubrity, surpass human belief, unless on should see them. In it the trees, pasture-lands and fruits different much from those of Juana. Besides, this *Hispana* abounds in various kinds of species, gold and metals. The inhabitants . . . are all, as I said before, unprovided with any sort of iron, and they are destitute of arms, which are entirely unknown to them, and for which they are not adapted; not on account of any bodily deformity, for they are well made, but because they are timid and full of terror. . . . But when they see that they are safe, and all fear is banished, they are very guileless and honest, and very liberal of all they have. No one refuses the asker anything that he possesses; on the contrary they themselves invite us to ask for it. They manifest the greatest affection towards all of us, exchanging valuable things for trifles, content with the very least thing or nothing at all. . . . I gave them many beautiful and pleasing things, which I had brought with me, for no return whatever, in order to win their affection, and that they might become Christians and inclined to love our King and Queen and Princes and all the people of Spain; and that they might be eager to search for and gather and give to us what they abound in and we greatly need.

What Became of the Taíno? (Smithsonian)
Grade: 11
SR:11.4/Lexile:1330
Text Complexity:
Word Count: 815

What Became of the Taíno?

The Indians who greeted Columbus were long believed to have died out. But a journalist's search for their descendants turned up surprising results

If you have ever paddled a *canoe*, napped in a *hammock*, savored a *barbecue*, smoked *tobacco* or tracked a *hurricane* across *Cuba*, you have paid tribute to the Taíno, the Indians who invented those words long before they welcomed Christopher Columbus to the New World in 1492.

Their world, which had its origins among the Arawak tribes of the Orinoco Delta, gradually spread from Venezuela across the Antilles in waves of voyaging and settlement begun around 400 B.C. Mingling with people already established in the Caribbean, they developed self-sufficient communities on the island of Hispaniola, in what is now Haiti and the Dominican Republic; in Jamaica and eastern Cuba; in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the Bahamas. They cultivated yuca, sweet potatoes, maize, beans and other crops as their culture flourished, reaching its peak by the time of European contact.

Some scholars estimate the Taíno population may have reached more than three million on Hispaniola alone as the 15th century drew to a close, with smaller settlements elsewhere in the Caribbean. Whatever the number, the Taíno towns described by Spanish chroniclers were densely settled, well organized and widely dispersed. The Indians were inventive people who learned to strain cyanide from life-giving yuca, developed pepper gas for warfare, devised an extensive pharmacopeia from nature, built oceangoing canoes large enough for more than 100 paddlers and played games with a ball made of rubber, which fascinated Europeans seeing the material for the first time. Although the Taíno never developed a written language, they made exquisite pottery, wove intricate belts from dyed cotton and carved enigmatic images from wood, stone, shell and bone.

The Taíno impressed Columbus with their generosity, which may have contributed to their undoing. "They will give all that they do possess for anything that is given to them, exchanging things even for bits of broken crockery," he noted upon meeting them in the Bahamas in 1492. "They were very well built,

with very handsome bodies and very good faces....They do not carry arms or know them....They should be good servants."

In short order, Columbus established the first American colony at La Isabela, on the north coast of Hispaniola, in 1494. After a brief period of coexistence, relations between the newcomers and natives deteriorated. Spaniards removed men from villages to work in gold mines and colonial plantations. This kept the Taíno from planting the crops that had fed them for centuries. They began to starve; many thousands fell prey to smallpox, measles and other European diseases for which they had no immunity; some committed suicide to avoid subjugation; hundreds fell in fighting with the Spaniards, while untold numbers fled to remote regions beyond colonial control. In time, many Taíno women married conquistadors, combining the genes of the New World and Old World to create a new mestizo population, which took on Creole characteristics with the arrival of African slaves in the 16th century. By 1514, barely two decades after first contact, an official survey showed that 40 percent of Spanish men had taken Indian wives. The unofficial number is undoubtedly higher.

"Very few Indians were left after 50 years," said Ricardo Alegría, a Puerto Rican historian and anthropologist I interviewed before his death this past July. He had combed through Spanish archives to track the eclipse of the Taíno. "Their culture was interrupted by disease, marriage with Spanish and Africans, and so forth, but the main reason the Indians were exterminated as a group was sickness," he told me. He ran through the figures from his native island: "By 1519, a third of the aboriginal population had died because of smallpox. You find documents very soon after that, in the 1530s, in which the question came from Spain to the governor. 'How many Indians are there? Who are the chiefs?' The answer was none. They are gone." Alegría paused before adding: "Some remained probably...but it was not that many."

Possibly as many as three million souls—some 85 percent of the Taíno population—had vanished by the early 1500s, according to a controversial extrapolation from Spanish records. As the Indian population faded, so did Taíno as a living language. The Indians' reliance on beneficent icons known as *cemís* gave way to Christianity, as did their hallucinogen-induced *cohoba* ceremonies, which were thought to put shamans in touch with the spirit world. Their regional chieftaincies, each headed by a leader known as a *cacique*, crumbled away. Their well-maintained ball courts reverted to bush.

Given the dramatic collapse of the indigenous society, and the emergence of a population blending Spanish, Indian and African attributes, one might be tempted to declare the Taíno extinct. Yet five

centuries after the Indians' fateful meeting with Columbus, elements of their culture endure—in the genetic heritage of modern Antilleans, in the persistence of Taíno words and in isolated communities where people carry on traditional methods of architecture, farming, fishing and healing.