How should we remember Columbus?

Supporting Questions

1. Who was Columbus?
2. How has Columbus been remembered?
# How should we remember Columbus?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illinois Social Studies Standard</th>
<th>SS.H.1.6-8.MC: Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept and Skill Focus</td>
<td><strong>Concept:</strong> Colonialism. <strong>Disciplinary Skill:</strong> Perspective-Taking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staging the Compelling Question</td>
<td>Examine two claims made about Christopher Columbus and using prior knowledge discuss the merits of each.</td>
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## Supporting Question 1

**Understand**

Who was Columbus?

**Formative Performance Task**

Complete a graphic organizer detailing what is known about Christopher Columbus.

## Supporting Question 2

**Assess**

How has Columbus been remembered?

**Formative Performance Task**

Create a T-Chart with one side listing the ways in which Columbus has been remembered and one side with the ways his image has been revisited by historians, educators, and governments.

## Featured Sources

**Source A:** Columbus reports on his first voyage, 1493  
**Source B:** A map showing Columbus’ four voyages to the Americas.  
**Source C:** Excerpt from Bartholomew de las Casas (1552) journal and engraving by Theodor de Bry (1552).  
**Source D:** Excerpt from James W. Loewen’s book, Lies My Teacher Told Me About Christopher Columbus: What Your History Books Got Wrong (2014)  
**Source E:** Excerpt on Christopher Columbus from the text, A People’s History of the United States, Howard Zinn (1980)  
**Source F:** Proclamations from State Governments replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous People’s Day (2015)

## Summative Performance Task

**ARGUMENT** How should we remember Columbus? Construct an argument consisting of a claim and counterclaim about how we should remember Columbus using the evidenced encountered in this inquiry.

**ACT** Read the assigned article and discuss how Illinois should reconcile the two holidays, Columbus Day and Indigenous People’s Day. Write a letter to a lawmaker arguing whether you agree or disagree with Illinois’ current position.
When asked to describe Christopher Columbus, most people generally say two things:

1. Christopher Columbus was a brave explorer who, despite terrible odds, sailed across the Atlantic to discover the New World.

2. Christopher Columbus did not “discover” America and instead enslaved and slaughtered many native people.
## Teaching the C3 Framework

### Christopher Columbus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Source</th>
<th>How does this map uniquely answer the question: Who was Christopher Columbus?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td><em>Columbus reports on his first voyage, 1493</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td><em>A map showing Columbus’ four voyages to the Americas.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td><em>Excerpt from Bartholomew de las Casas (1552) journal</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
<td><em>Engraving by Theodor de Bry</em></td>
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</table>
## EXCERPT

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.

They ... brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks' bells. They willingly traded everything they owned. . . . They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features. . . . They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane. . . . They would make fine servants. . . . With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.

As soon as I arrived in the Indies, on the first Island which I found, I took some of the natives by force in order that they might learn and might give me information of whatever there is in these parts.
Supporting Question 1

**Featured Source**

| Source B: Map showing Columbus' four voyages to the Americas |

The routes of the four Voyages of Christopher Columbus. Maritime expeditions, during 1492 to 1504, to the Caribbean Islands and coast of Central America in North America.
## Supporting Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Featured Source</th>
<th>Source C: Excerpt from Bartholomew de las Casas (1552) journal and engraving.</th>
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"They would cut an Indian's hands and leave them dangling by a shred of skin ... [and] they would test their swords and their manly strength on captured Indians and place bets on the slicing off of heads or cutting of bodies in half with one blow. ... [One] cruel captain traveled over many leagues, capturing all the Indians he could find. Since the Indians would not tell him who their new lord was, he cut off the hands of some and threw others to the dogs, and thus they were torn to pieces."

Engraving by [Theodor de Bry](http://example.com) depicting the controversial account by [Bartolomé de las Casas](http://example.com) regarding the *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, 1552.
<table>
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<th>Columbus Remembered</th>
<th>Columbus Revisted</th>
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Supporting Question 2

**Featured Source**

**Source A:** A depiction of Columbus claiming possession of the New World in caravels, the Niña and the Pinta. Painting, John VanDerlyn (1775-1852)

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Christopher Columbus is depicted landing in the West Indies, on an island that the natives called Guanahani and he named San Salvador, on October 12, 1492. He raises the royal banner, claiming the land for his Spanish patrons, and stands bareheaded, with his hat at his feet, in honor of the sacredness of the event. The captains of the Niña and Pinta follow, carrying the banner of Ferdinand and Isabella. The crew displays a range of emotions, some searching for gold in the sand. Natives watch from behind a tree. John Vanderlyn (1775-1852) had studied with Gilbert Stuart and was the first American painter to be trained in Paris, where he worked on this canvas for ten years with the help of assistants.
Columbus Day in the United States

- The first Columbus Day celebration took place in 1792, when New York’s Columbian Order—better known as Tammany Hall—held an event to commemorate the historic landing’s 300th anniversary. Taking pride in Columbus’ birthplace and faith, Italian and Catholic communities in various parts of the country began organizing annual religious ceremonies and parades in his honor.

- In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison issued a proclamation encouraging Americans to mark the 400th anniversary of Columbus’ voyage with patriotic festivities, writing, “On that day let the people, so far as possible, cease from toil and devote themselves to such exercises as may best express honor to the discoverer and their appreciation of the great achievements of the four completed centuries of American life.”

- In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed Columbus Day a national holiday, largely as a result of intense lobbying by the Knights of Columbus, an influential Catholic fraternal organization.

- Below is a recording of FDR proclaiming Columbus Day a national holiday in one of his fireside chats:

Excerpt: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrX_gOvIS4k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrX_gOvIS4k)

Supporting Question 2

**Featured Source**

**Source C:** *In 1492*, Poem about Christopher Columbus, By Jean Marzollo

**IN 1492**

In fourteen hundred ninety-two
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

He had three ships and left from Spain;
He sailed through sunshine, wind and rain.

He sailed by night; he sailed by day;
He used the stars to find his way.

A compass also helped him know
How to find the way to go.

Ninety sailors were on board;
Some men worked while others snored.

Then the workers went to sleep;
And others watched the ocean deep.

Day after day they looked for land;
They dreamed of trees and rocks and sand.

October 12 their dream came true,
You never saw a happier crew!

“Indians! Indians!” Columbus cried;
His heart was filled with joyful pride.

But “India” the land was not;
It was the Bahamas, and it was hot.

The Arakawa natives were very nice;
They gave the sailors food and spice.

Columbus sailed on to find some gold
To bring back home, as he’d been told.

He made the trip again and again,
Trading gold to bring to Spain.

The first American? No, not quite.
But Columbus was brave, and he was bright.
To emphasize the heroism of Columbus and his successors as navigators and discoverers, and to de-emphasize their genocide, is not a technical necessity but an ideological choice. It serves- unwittingly-to justify what was done. My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse, judge, condemn Columbus in absentia. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality. But the easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress (Hiroshima and Vietnam, to save Western civilization; Kronstadt and Hungary, to save socialism; nuclear proliferation, to save us all)-that is still with us. One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth. We have learned to give them exactly the same proportion of attention that teachers and writers often give them in the most respectable of classrooms and textbooks. This learned sense of moral proportion, coming from the apparent objectivity of the scholar, is accepted more easily when it comes from politicians at press conferences. It is therefore more deadly.

The treatment of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawaks)-the quiet acceptance of conquest and murder in the name of progress-is only one aspect of a certain approach to history, in which the past is told from the point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats, leaders. It is as if they, like Columbus, deserve universal acceptance, as if they-the Founding Fathers, Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, Roosevelt, Kennedy, the leading members of Congress, the famous Justices of the Supreme Court-represent the nation as a whole. The pretense is that there really is such a thing as "the United States," subject to occasional conflicts and quarrels, but fundamentally a community of people with common interests. It is as if there really is a "national interest" represented in the Constitution, in territorial expansion, in the laws passed by Congress, the decisions of the courts, the development of capitalism, the culture of education and the mass media.

My viewpoint, in telling the history of the United States, is different: that we must not accept the memory of states as our own. Nations are not communities and never have been. The history of any country, presented as the history of a family, conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex. And in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people, as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners.

Thus, in that inevitable taking of sides which comes from selection and emphasis in history, I prefer to try to tell the story of the discovery of America from the viewpoint of the Arawaks, of the Constitution from the standpoint of the slaves, of Andrew Jackson as seen by the Cherokees, of the Civil War as seen by the New York Irish, of the Mexican war as seen by the deserteing soldiers of Scott's army, of the rise of industrialism as seen by the young women in the Lowell textile mills, of the Spanish-American war as seen by the Cubans, the conquest of the Philippines as seen by black soldiers on Luzon, the Gilded Age as seen by southern farmers, the First World War as seen by socialists, the Second World War as seen by pacifists, the New Deal as seen by blacks in Harlem, the postwar American empire as seen by peons in Latin America. And so on, to the limited extent that any one person, however he or she strains, can "see" history from the standpoint of others.

My point is not to grieve for the victims and denounce the executioners. Those tears, that anger, cast into the past, deplete our moral energy for the present. And the lines are not always clear. In the long run, the oppressor is also a victim. In the short run (and so far, human history has consisted only of short runs), the victims, themselves desperate and tainted with the culture that oppresses them, turn on other victims.
**Supporting Question 2**

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**Somebody Was Already Living Here**

Every textbook tells us that people lived in the Americas before Christopher Columbus landed. However, when authors swing into what they see as their main story—the settlement of the Americas by Europeans—Native Americans pretty much drop out of some books. The omissions begin with their presentations of Columbus. American Indians play bit parts in the Columbus story. The 2005 edition of *A History of the United States*, by Daniel Boorstin, former Librarian of Congress, and Brooks Mather Kelley, former chief archivist at Yale University, devotes almost two thousand words to the story of Columbus’s four voyages to America. This is the longest account in any of the 22 books I surveyed. Yet in this account, Native Americans get only five words: “The natives called it Guanahani, and Columbus named it San Salvador.”

Boorstin and Kelley do go on to allot their next two pages of text, one page of photos, and a map to American Indians. This small section of 1,250 words tries to cover 40,000 years and more than 400 societies, from Peru to the Arctic, in less space than Columbus gets!

Several books do much better. Five books devote their first chapter to Native Americans. *The American Adventure* gives three chapters—40 pages—to “The Earliest Immigrants.” Nine books, including five of the six newest, also supply interesting information on Native Americans in the twentieth century. They show that the issues that Columbus raised are not yet settled.

**Supporting Question 2**

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<td>Source E: Proclomations from State Governments replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous People’s Day</td>
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**PROCLAMATIONS: DENVER, CO**

WHEREAS, Indigenous Peoples’ Day was first proposed in 1977, by a delegation of Native Nations to the United Nations-sponsored International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas; and

WHEREAS, Colorado encompasses the ancestral homelands of 48 tribes and currently the City and County of Denver and the surrounding communities are home to descendants of approximately 100 tribal nations; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the City and County of Denver recognizes that the Indigenous Peoples have lived and flourished on the lands known as the Americas since time immemorial, and that Denver and the surrounding communities are built upon on the ancestral homelands of numerous Indigenous tribes; and
WHEREAS, the seasonal encampments of the Arapaho and Cheyenne peoples along the banks of the Cherry Creek and South Platte River confluence gave bearing to future settlements that would later become the birthplace of the Mile High City; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the City and County of Denver recognizes and values the vast contributions made to our community through Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, science, philosophy, arts and culture, and through these contributions the City of Denver has developed and thrived, and

WHEREAS, the City of Denver shall continue to promote racial equity and justice for all people and oppose discrimination towards Indigenous Peoples as it perpetuates poverty, income inequality, inequities in health and education.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER:

Section 1. That in the pursuit of the shared goals and responsibilities of promoting knowledge about Indigenous peoples, unifying communities, and combating prejudice and eliminating discrimination against Indigenous Peoples the City and County of Denver, Colorado, does hereby proclaim October, 12 2015 as "Indigenous Peoples’ Day."

Section 2. That the Council of the City and County of Denver celebrates and honors the cultural and foundational contributions of Indigenous People to the history of our City, State, and Country.

Section 3. That the Clerk of the City and County of Denver shall attest and affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and that a copy be transmitted to the Denver American Indian Commission, the Denver Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships, and the Governor of Colorado, John W. Hickenlooper.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL October 12, 2015.


PROCLAMATIONS: CORVALLIS, OR

PROCLAMATION INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY

WHEREAS, Christopher Columbus, a man who is known to have "discovered" the Americas, came upon land that was already inhabited by Indigenous Peoples; and

WHEREAS, Columbus' voyage to the Americas opened the door to crimes, including but not limited to the introduction of transatlantic slavery and genocidal acts against Indigenous People; and

WHEREAS, The Indigenous People were promised security and protection though were forcibly relocated and their land seized to allow for European settlements; and
WHEREAS, The City of Corvallis and current day Benton County was historically inhabited by the Kalapuya people; and

WHEREAS, The City of Corvallis recognizes and acknowledges the significant contributions made in our community by Indigenous People and commits to ensure greater access and opportunity for continued contribution; and

WHEREAS, The City of Corvallis has the opportunity and means to cultivate a community that honors and respects the diverse history of our community; and

WHEREAS, The State of Oregon does not formally recognize Columbus Day; and

WHEREAS, The idea of Indigenous Peoples’ Day was first proposed in 1977 by a delegation of Native Nations to the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, This day should be recognized for the original inhabitants of the Americas - Indigenous People; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Biff Traber, Mayor of Corvallis, Oregon, do hereby proclaim Monday, October 12, 2015 as Indigenous Peoples’ Day in the City and strongly encourage community members, schools, businesses, public and private organizations, and other community partners to join communities across America in recognizing and promoting the wellbeing and understanding of the contributions of our Indigenous communities.

Source: Proclamation Indigenous Peoples Day, City of Corvallis, Office of the Mayor,

PROCLAMATIONS: ALBUQUERQUE, NM

WHEREAS, Albuquerque recognizes the occupation of New Mexico’s homelands for the building of our City and knows indigenous nations have lived upon this land since time immemorial and values the progress of our society accomplished through and by American Indian thought, culture, and technology; and

WHEREAS, the idea of Indigenous Peoples Day was first proposed in 1977 by a delegation of Native nations to the United Nations-sponsored International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to reveal a more accurate historical record of the “discovery” of the United States of America, representatives from 120 Indigenous nations at the First Continental Conference on 500 years of Indian Resistance, unanimously passed a resolution to transform Second Monday of October into an occasion to recognize the contributions of Indigenous people despite enormous efforts against native nations; and

WHEREAS, Albuquerque has a strong history throughout the years of supporting the American Indian Community and its citizens advancement in our current society and Albuquerque shall continue its efforts to promote the wellbeing and growth of Albuquerque’s American Indian Community and Indigenous Community; and
TEACHING THE C3 FRAMEWORK

WHEREAS, Albuquerque encourages businesses, organizations and public entities to recognize Indigenous Peoples Day which shall be used to reflect upon the ongoing struggles of Indigenous people on this land, and to celebrate the thriving culture and value that our Indigenous nations add to our City.

BE IT PROCLAIMED THAT THE COUNCIL, THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE, HEREBY RECOGNIZES THE SECOND MONDAY OF OCTOBER AS

__________

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY

Source: Indigenous Peoples Day Proclamation, The Council of the City of Albuquerque,

https://therednationdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/indigenous-peoples-day-proc.pdf

PROCLAMATIONS: LEWISTON, NY

WHEREAS, the Town of Lewiston recognizes Indigenous people have lived upon this land since time immemorial and values the progress our society has accomplished through the contributions of the Indigenous peoples’ culture, and

WHEREAS, natives and non-natives have shared this community for hundreds of years and the Indigenous people have provided us friendship, guidance and protection, and

WHEREAS, the idea of Indigenous Peoples Day was first proposed in 1977 by a delegation of Native nations to the United Nations – sponsored International Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous populations in the Americas, and

WHEREAS, other cities and communities, locally and around the Country, have declared their own Indigenous Peoples Day, including the Town of Newstead and Village of Akron in Erie County, and Seattle, Washington, Minneapolis, Minnesota, South Dakota also recognizes the second Monday in October as Native American Day, an official State holiday, and

WHEREAS, the Town Board of Lewiston, New York wishes to recognize Natives with a day to celebrate and honor Indigenous people to better reflect the experiences of Indigenous people and to hold in esteem their roots, history and contributions, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Lewiston wishes to preserve and promote the history and culture of all Indigenous people and believes the time has come to observe a yearly holiday in their name.

SO THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Lewiston declares the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples Day in the Town of Lewiston from this day forward, and that it encourages continued recognition, appreciation and celebration of our goodwill and friendship with our local Indigenous Peoples.

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Source: Regular Town Board Meeting Minutes, September 28, 2015, p. 16, Town of Lewiston, NY,

TEACHING THE C3 FRAMEWORK
How should we remember Columbus?

Argument Stance

Claim 1

We should remember Columbus...

Evidence: ______________________

Evidence: ______________________

Claim 2

Evidence: ______________________

Claim 3

Evidence: ______________________

Evidence: ______________________

Evidence: ______________________
States like Hawaii, South Dakota and Alaska have replaced Columbus Day with the designation of ‘Indigenous Peoples’ Day.’ It's a trend that goes back decades, and in 2017 a law was signed that brought Illinois up to speed with that trend. Sort of.

The concept of Indigenous Peoples' Day was brought about by organizations that argue it is wrong to glorify European colonialism that included the genocide of native people in America. The law signed last year designates the last Monday of each September as Indigenous Peoples' Day in Illinois.

But some Native American organizations aren’t pleased with that. They say the day should be celebrated in lieu of Columbus Day, which still stands as a state holiday in Illinois. Last year, the American Indian Center of Chicago issued the following statement:

“The American Indian Center was surprised to learn of this new bill and are disappointed that it passed. Indigenous people were not consulted during the crafting and passing of this bill. We believe that all peoples deserve respect, public comment and consultation in regards to holidays that affect us as a community. We view this as an insult and a threat to current progress made towards recognition of Indigenous Peoples Day on the Second Monday of October and a flagrant act of disrespect toward our community”.

Nichole Boyd is the director of the Native American House at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. While she declined to weigh in the controversy, she helped plan events to celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day in lieu of Columbus Day, on October 8th. "It is truly for us a day of celebration and acknowledgment that we are still here. To celebrate our cultures, our languages, our families, our ancestors and our accomplishments." This is the first year the day will be acknowledged as a university-wide event, spokesperson Robin Kaler told The News-Gazette. The keynote speaker is Charlene Teters, a U of I alum, activist and artist who has long been vocal about Chief Illiniwek, who was retired as the official U of I mascot in 2007 but who maintains an active fan base and presence.

Boyd said others who are interested in bringing about similar traditions at their own institutions can start by researching the land they are on. For instance, she said the U of I is "on the land of over 13 tribes and we're working to build relationships with those tribal communities." Said Boyd, "Reach out to the Indigenous folks whose land you're on and ask them what they think is the best way to celebrate." She points to cities like Evanston who have declared the repurposing of Columbus Day within their own local governments.

See article: http://www.wksu.org/post/it-time-illinois-stop-celebrating-columbus-day#stream/0