

**Vocabulary:** **sth** = something; **sb** = somebody. \*=key vocabulary

\*accidental: not on purpose; in an unexpected way.

\*honor: the respect that you, your country (etc) receives from others who are proud of you or your achievements (verb: to give this respect)

\*indigenous: native; not brought from somewhere else

voyage: a long trip by ship (or spacecraft)

colony: an area under the political control of a more powerful country, usually far away. [**The USA's 13 original states had formerly been British colonies in North America.**]

colonial/colonization: *colonial* connects a noun to a colony (colonial governor/trade/war/resources/etc); *colonization* is the overall practice of making someplace into a colony

vice: a bad characteristic in humans, from a mild failing to a wicked or immoral habit

to decimate: to destroy a large part of sth

\*complicated: complex; difficult to understand because it involves many related parts

\*plenty of sth to go around: (idom) a lot of sth (love/money/hate/fun/blame), to share between many people

ruthless: without pity or heart; harsh; deadly

\*the Silk Road: an ancient over-land trade route between China and the Mediterranean Sea

jihad: a holy war fought as a religious duty by Muslims (similar to the antique meaning of *crusade* in Christian contexts)

to prompt: to make sb decide to do sth [**My parents prompted me to study law, but I wanted to be a musician.**]

cannibal: a person who eats other people

(Spanish) monk: religious men who sought to bring the light of their faith to people while caring for their needs (education, medicine, etc)

\*controversy: a serious argument or disagreement because many people have strong yet different opinions on the subject

\*heritage: traditional customs or values (often related to something shared, such as ethnicity or a family's history)

to cancel: to end or stop sth (e.g., a computer command, a meeting, a plan of action). "Sorry, but I must cancel today's lunch appointment." "Press the 'cancel' button on your computer and the program should stop."

\*to cancel sb; cancel culture: public shaming or intolerance; to 'cancel' support for a company, friend, purpose, etc., because they did something you think they should be ashamed of

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Our previous lesson showed that Italian Christopher Columbus dared to sail west, trying to reach Asia in 1492. His accidental discovery of Central America made the world smaller, bringing him great honor. But in the late 1900s, Columbus was blamed for bringing European disease and other evils upon native populations, and Columbus Day became "Indigenous People's Day" in many parts of the US.

Christopher Columbus was imperfect, like all of us. He was a skillful navigator but didn't control his crew well; he completed four dangerous voyages but was mistaken that he had reached the Indies. Columbus was also a flawed colonial governor. After he returned to Spain, the crew he left behind disobeyed his orders, raped and enslaved the natives,



godreports.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Columbus-Miami-747x420.jpg

consequently introducing sexually-transmitted *syphilis* to Europe. On later voyages, Columbus is also connected with cruelty. And tragically, European diseases, lust for gold, and the vices of colonization decimated the native population. A common protest on Indigenous People's Day is that "This Land Was Stolen, Not Discovered."

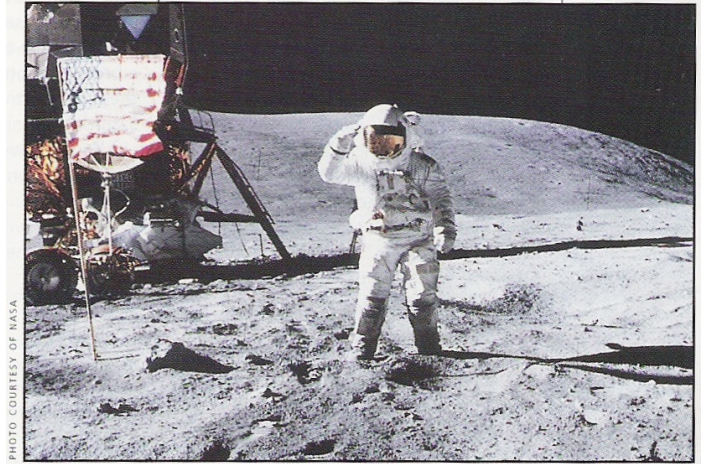
Yet history is complicated, with plenty of blame to go around. China's vast Mongol Dynasty (though ruthless earlier) had produced safe trade across the Silk Road, but in Columbus' time Islamic jihad brought widespread bloodshed between China and Europe, as well as in Spain and northern Africa; dangerous trade routes prompted Columbus to seek a western route. Meanwhile,

(quoting *Stars and Stripes*) "cruel behavior was not new in the Americas. The Aztecs and Mayans of Mexico practiced human sacrifice and held slaves. The Caribe Indians in the Caribbean islands were cannibals." Many indigenous tribes were fierce warriors, both before and after the Europeans arrived.

The Europeans did not intend to introduce deadly diseases in the Americas, any more than native Americans intended to unleash the danger of tobacco upon the rest of the world. At the same time, colonization (in spite of great abuses) brought life-saving foods like the potato to Europe, while Europeans brought the horse and other benefits to the Americas. And few would say that cannibals were better off before Spanish monks brought teachings of God's love and human worth.

The Columbus/Indigenous People's Day controversy helps us remember that history is filled with flawed people and mistakes that flow from greed and power. But to judge the people of the past by today's standards would mean ignoring complicated realities.

Yes, let's celebrate Indigenous People's Day and learn from each other's heritage! Let's also celebrate "Explorers' Day," honoring the captains, pilots, astronauts, scientists, and others who bravely pull the world forward. Instead of "canceling" past heroes, let us learn from those who lived before us, forgiving them as we hope to be forgiven, and inspired by them to undertake risks for a better tomorrow.



Discussion: (are there any sentences you want to ask your teacher about?)

1. If a friend asked you what this "controversy" is about, how would you explain it in a simple way?
2. If Christopher Columbus had never been born, do you think that European people would never have moved to the Americas?
3. Should Columbus be blamed for the bad things that decimated native Americans? Why or why not?
4. How did colonization *help*, and how did it *hurt* the world?
5. The article says that history is filled with flawed people, and that many world problems flow from greed and power. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
6. Complete this sentence: History is also filled with \_\_\_\_\_ people, who help the world move forward by \_\_\_\_\_.
7. In your opinion, why do some people fill the world with "good," while some spread "evil"? Where do "good/evil" come from?
8. What are the dangers of "cancel culture" and what does the author suggest that we do instead?

If you still have time, choose one of Columbus' quotes and explain why you chose that one.

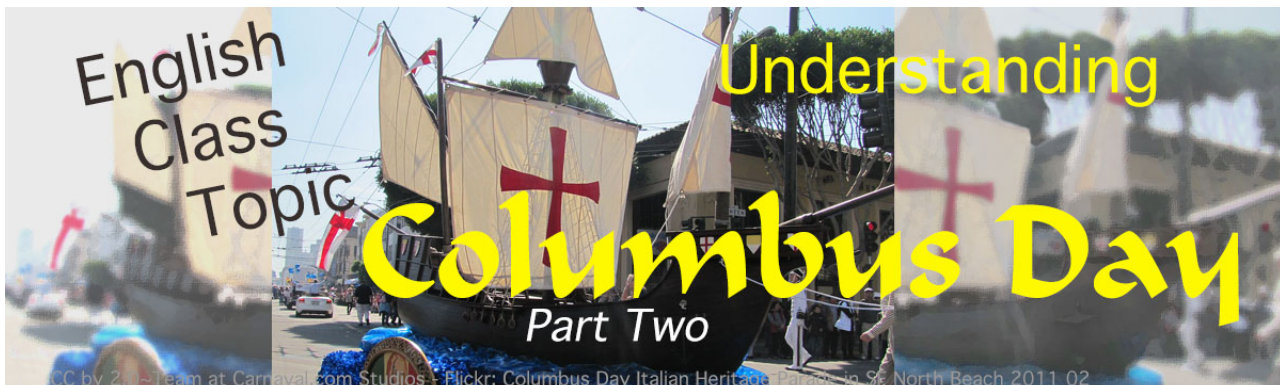
*Quotes from Christopher Columbus:*

~ "I am a most noteworthy sinner, but I have cried out to the Lord for grace and mercy, and they have covered me completely."

~ "Weep for me, whoever has charity, truth and justice! I did not come on this voyage for gain, honor or wealth, that is certain."

~ "By prevailing over all obstacles and distractions, one may unfailingly arrive at his chosen goal or destination."

~ "Praise be to our eternal God, our Lord, who gives to all those who walk in His ways victory over all things which seem impossible"



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In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed west, trying to reach Asia. His accidental discovery of Central America made the world smaller, bringing him great honor. But in the late 1900s, Columbus was blamed for bringing disease and other evils from Europe, and Columbus Day became "Indigenous People's Day" in many parts of the US.

Christopher Columbus was imperfect. He was a skillful navigator but didn't control his crew well, and as governor he was associated with cruelty. After he returned to Spain, his crew raped and enslaved the natives, consequently introducing sexually-transmitted *syphilis* to Europe. And tragically, European diseases, lust for gold, and the evils of colonization killed countless native Americans. A common protest on Indigenous People's Day is that "This Land Was Stolen, Not Discovered."

Yet history is complicated. China's vast Mongol Dynasty had produced safe trade, but in Columbus' time Islamic wars brought widespread bloodshed between China and Europe, as well as in Spain and northern Africa; dangerous trade routes prompted Columbus to seek a western route. Meanwhile, the native Aztecs and Mayans of Mexico practiced human sacrifice and held slaves. Other indigenous tribes were cannibals, and/or fierce warriors.

Neither Europeans nor native Americans intended to spread deadly diseases/cancers around the world. At the same time, colonization (in spite of great abuses) brought life-saving foods like potatoes to the world, while benefits like horses and medicines flowed to the Americas.

The Columbus/Indigenous People's Day controversy helps us remember that history is filled with flawed people and mistakes that flow from greed and power. But to judge the people of the past by today's standards would mean ignoring complicated realities.

Yes, let's celebrate Indigenous People's Day and learn from each other's heritage! Let's also celebrate "Explorers' Day," honoring the captains, astronauts, scientists, and others who bravely pull the world forward. Instead of "canceled" past heroes, let us learn from those who lived before us, forgiving them as we hope to be forgiven, and inspired by them to undertake risks for a better tomorrow.

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Discussion: (are there any sentences you want to ask your teacher about?)

1. Content questions:

- When did "Columbus Day" become "Indigenous People's Day" in parts of the US?
  - What did people blame Columbus for, that started this controversy?
  - What prompted Columbus to look for a new, western trade route?
  - What tragic things killed countless native Americans?
  - What terrible things did some indigenous tribes do before Columbus arrived?
  - The author says we should celebrate both Indigenous People's Day and (what?) Day?
- If a friend asked you what this "controversy" is about, how would you explain it in a simple way?
  - If Christopher Columbus had never been born, do you think that European people would never have moved to the Americas? Why or why not?



4. The article says that history is filled with flawed people, and that many world problems flow from greed and power. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
5. Complete this sentence: History is also filled with \_\_\_\_\_ people, who help the world move forward by \_\_\_\_\_.
6. What are the dangers of “cancel culture” and what does the author suggest that we do instead?

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These lessons were created or adapted by the staff of International Friendship Ministries, P.O. Box 12504, Columbia SC 29211; ifmusa.org; info@ifmusa.org. IFM is grateful to Kathy Williams for most of the original work. Some lessons were adapted from EFLsuccess.com (with permission). IFM makes these lessons available to our participants, but this does not imply our consent for others to publish these lessons online or in print without permission.

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