

Document A

Joel Barlow was an early American poet who lived from 1754 to 1812. The following is an excerpt from his poem *The Vision of Columbus* which hailed the explorer as a hero.

Such was the situation of Columbus, when he formed and thoroughly digested a plan, which, in its operation and consequences, unfolded to the view of mankind one half of the globe, diffused wealth and dignity over the other, and extended commerce and civilization through the whole.

--Joel Barlow, *The Vision of Columbus* (1787)

Document B

Howard Zinn is a professor of history at Boston University. He received a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University and is the author of more than 20 books. In the excerpt below, Zinn cites the writing of Bartolomé de las Casas, a Catholic priest who moved from Spain to the New World in 1508. De las Casas witnessed and opposed the harsh treatment of the natives by Spanish settlers.

When he arrived on Hispaniola in 1508, Las Casas says, "there were 60,000 people living on this island, including the Indians; so that from 1494 to 1508, over three million people had perished from war, slavery, and the mines. Who in future generations will believe this? I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it...."

Thus began the history, five hundred years ago, of the European invasion of the Indian settlements in the Americas. That beginning, when you read Las Casas--even if his figures are exaggerations (were there 3 million Indians to begin with, as he says, or less than a million, as some historians have calculated, or 8 million as others now believe?)--is conquest, slavery, death. When we read the history books given to children in the United States, it all starts with heroic adventure--there is no bloodshed--and Columbus Day is a celebration.

--Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (1980)

Document C

The voyage of Christopher Columbus and his diminutive fleet toward the unknown west was not only a prelude to a new historical era. For the brave navigator it was the culmination of years of bold speculation, careful preparation, and struggle against opponents who had belittled his great plan and thwarted its execution...

The courage and the faith and the vision of the Genoese navigator glorify and enrich the drama of the early movement of European people to America. Columbus and his fellow voyagers were the harbingers of later mighty movements of people from Spain, from Columbus's native Italy and from every country in Europe. And out of the fusion of all these national strains was created the America to which the Old World contributed so magnificently...

The promise which Columbus's discovery gave to the world, of a new beginning in the march of human progress, has been in process of fulfillment for four centuries...

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Statement on Columbus Day.
October 12, 1940

Document D



Hispaniola Indians offering Columbus' men piles of gold in exchange for their shoelaces (illustration from Theodor de Bry, 1594)

Theodorus de Bry created a large number of engraved illustrations for his books. Most of his books were based on first-hand observations by explorers, even if De Bry himself, acting as a recorder of information, never visited the Americas.

The inhabitants... 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.

- Christopher Columbus's letter to Ferdinand and Isabella, 1493.

Document E

Dr. Warren H. Carroll is a leading Catholic historian and author, and the founder of Christendom College. He received his Ph.D. in history from Columbia University. The following excerpt is from an article he wrote for *The Catholic Social Science Review*.

Let us begin, therefore, by defining the word "discovery" in the context of history. A discovery is made when an individual or a nation finds something or someone or some people or some places of special importance, not previously known to them. When any previously unknown people is first found by another people, that people may be said to have been discovered. People as well as places can be discovered. The fact that people live in places unknown to another people does not mean that they, and the places where they live, cannot be discovered. No people from any other part of the world ever discovered Europe; but Europeans discovered all other parts of the world.

In all of history, only the Europeans and the Polynesians of the south Pacific have been true discoverers, sailing for the explicit purpose of finding new lands, trading with their people, and colonizing them. And of all discoverers, Christopher Columbus was the greatest, because he accomplished the most against the highest odds. Before Columbus' time all European voyages had followed coastlines, or crossed open seas to lands previously known or at least sighted by storm-driven ships. Only Columbus set off directly across a broad, unknown sea with no specific knowledge of how far it extended or what lay on the other side.

*--Warren Carroll, *Honoring Christopher Columbus* (1992)*

Document F

Over half a millennium ago, Christopher Columbus -- an ambitious navigator native to Genoa, Italy -- set sail for new horizons. Aboard the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa María, his expedition went west for a months-long journey...

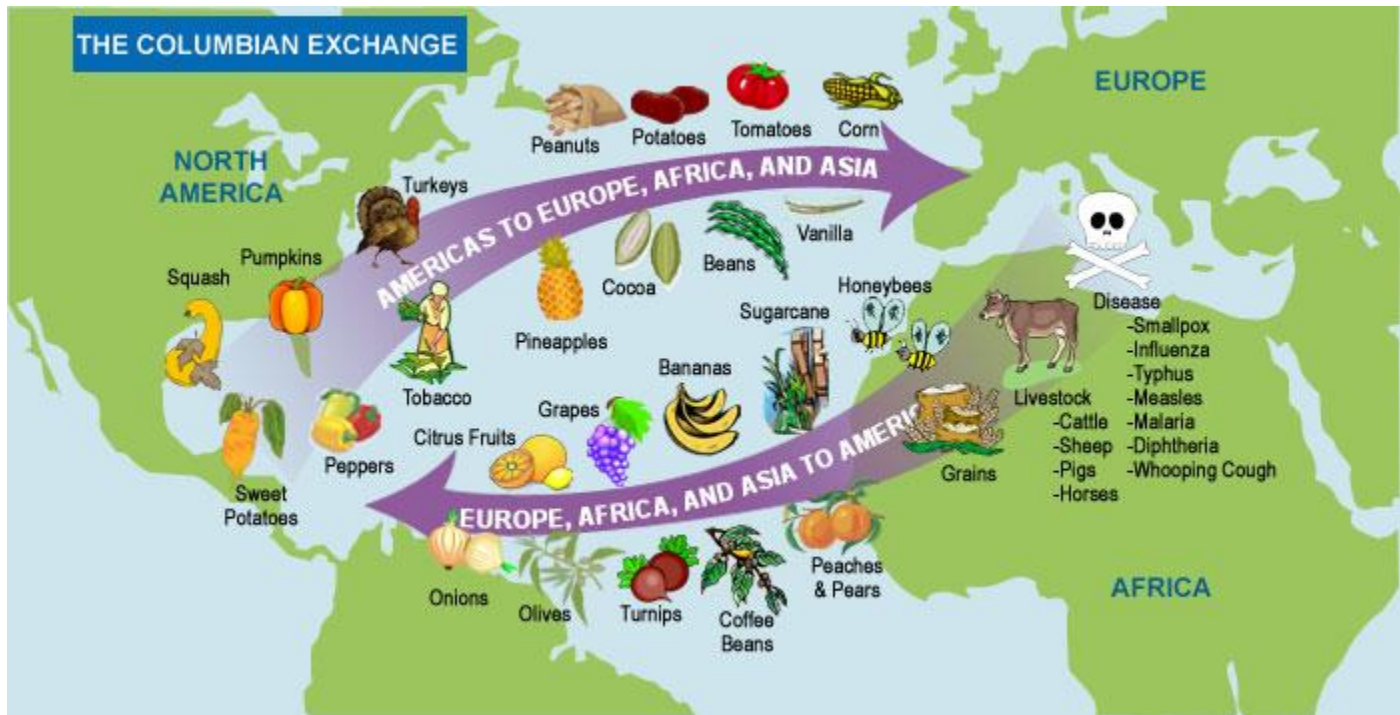
Columbus's legacy is embodied in the spirit of our Nation. Determined and curious, the young explorer persevered after having been doubted by many of his potential patrons...

Though these early travels expanded the realm of European exploration, to many they also marked a time that forever changed the world for the indigenous peoples of North America. Previously unseen disease, devastation, and violence were introduced to their lives -- and as we pay tribute to the ways in which Columbus pursued ambitious goals -- we also recognize the suffering inflicted upon Native Americans and we recommit to strengthening tribal sovereignty and maintaining our strong ties.

In the years since Columbus's time, the legacy of early explorers has carried on in the wide eyes of aspiring young dreamers and doers, eager to make their own journeys and to continue reaching for the unknown and unlocking new potential.

Barack Obama
Presidential Proclamation -- Columbus Day, October 09, 2015

Document G



The Columbian Exchange

The voyages of European explorers brought together two parts of the globe that had had little contact up to then: Europe, Asia, and Africa in one hemisphere and the Americas in the other. The voyages led to the exchange of people, plants, animals, and germs from each continent to the other. This exchange—today known as the Columbian Exchange—had a great effect on the world's cultures. For example, the horse dramatically changed life on the Great Plains for many Native Americans.

The effects of the Columbian Exchange were not always positive. For Native Americans, contact with Europeans introduced new diseases. The Native Americans had not developed natural defenses to these illnesses. Smallpox and other diseases hit native populations extremely hard.

Source: McGraw-Hill

Document H

Columbian Exchange (Brain Pop Video) – 7:18