

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Lesson Title – Controversial Columbus

Grade - 7

Length of class period – 45 minutes

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

What was Christopher Columbus really like?

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

1. Students will question the traditional historical representation of Columbus
2. Students will develop questions about the nature of Columbus' motivations
3. Students will brainstorm ideas from the differing illustrations of Columbus

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) – (please attach)

Illustrations of Columbus are available on the website—

<http://muweb.millersville.edu/~columbus> Click on the “Discovery Literature and Other Sites” and then in the black box, click on “portraits”

Interesting article under “Discovery Literature and Other Sites”, then click on “The Historical Image of Columbus” then “Download”.

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

1. Students will be divided into groups of five or six to analyze each illustration
2. Students will discuss their illustration and list observation
3. Students will draw possible conclusions about the motivation of the artist or the artist's bias
4. The groups will share their illustrations and observations at the end of the class

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

1. Observation of the group process and student participation
2. Access the understanding and objective of the assignment
3. Access the level of critical thinking displayed

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

Understanding historical perspective through art



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Rethinking the Spanish “Black Legend” and the Controversial Historical Image of Columbus



The “Black Legend” or dark view related to the early Spanish conquest had a seemingly valid historical basis for appearing on the scene because of the senseless and brutal acts of some of the early Spanish conquistadors. However, in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century the Spanish “Black Legend” died out when it became apparent that the indigenous natives in Spanish colonies fared as well or better from a humanitarian and legal rights

standpoint as those in many of the other European colonies. During this time, Columbus was viewed as a devout Christian and the high motives in his discovery and colonization efforts were never questioned. This view changed radically in the late twentieth century when American historians, as well as philosophical, humanist, and moralist writers, turned their attention to an examination of the treatment of indigenous natives of the New World by their European conquerors. The changed view has revived the Spanish "Black Legend" with Columbus pictured as the leading cause of the mistreatment of the indigenous natives of the New World. This study examines the documentary evidence on the subject to determine which view is historically correct.

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