

Analysing Historical Sources

Guiding Question: Columbus and the native Americans - a meeting of equal partners?



Circa 1500, An Indian Cacique (leader) of the Island of Cuba, with Christopher Columbus.
Original Artwork: An engraving by F Bartolozzi after a drawing by B West.

<http://www.gettyimages.fi/detail/news-photo/circa-1500-an-indian-cacique-of-the-island-of-cuba-with-news-photo/51243628>

1. Look at the picture and make a guess – are the people in the picture presented as equal partners?

Excerpts from Christopher Columbus' Logbook, 1492 A.D.

October 11th

They were very friendly to us. I presented gave them some red caps and many other things of small value¹. They were much delighted² and became wonderfully attached to³ us I think these people would be good servants. I also think that they would very easily become Christians, as they seem to have no religion.

October 14th

I have ordered to take seven of them to Spain in order to learn our language. If your Highnesses⁴ should choose transport all of them to Spain it would be no problem, I could conquer⁵ all of them with fifty men and govern⁶ them as I pleased.

November 12th

They learn very quickly the prayers we repeat⁷ to them, and they also learn to make the cross. Your Highnesses should therefore convert them⁸ to Christianity. I think a very short time would be enough for Spain to gain great riches and immense dominions⁹ with all their inhabitants.

adapted and simplified from: Journal of Columbus abridged by Las Casas, in: A.W. Lawrence, Jean Young (eds.): Narratives of the Discovery of America, New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith 1931.

¹ Wert

² begeistert sein

³ jmd. zugetan sein

⁴ Eure Hoheiten (die spanischen Monarchen Königin Isabella I und König Ferdinand II)

⁵ erobern

⁶ regieren

⁷ etw. wiederholen

⁸ jmd. konvertieren, jmd. veranlassen eine Religion anzunehmen

⁹ Herrschaftsgebiete

1. What is a logbook and who is it addressed to?

A logbook is _____
and it is addressed to _____

2. What do you already know about Columbus, the author of the logbook?

Christopher Columbus was the person who _____

3. What kind of situation does Columbus describe in his logbook?

Columbus describes _____

4. How does Columbus describe the people he meets in America?

Columbus describes the people he meets in America as _____

5. What does the way Columbus describes the American people tell you about himself and the other Spanish people?

Columbus and the Spanish people see themselves as _____

6. Please mark Columbus' plans for the American people in the text and explain why he suggests those plans to the Spanish monarchs?

Columbus suggests that _____

because _____

7. How do you judge Columbus' attitude towards the native Americans from today's point of view: Did he treat them as equal partners?

I think Columbus did/ did not treat the native Americans as equal partners because _____

