

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Columbus DBQ***

### **DBQ Question:**

Analyze the causes and effects of Christopher Columbus' exploration of the Americas. In your essay, respond to the questions: Should Columbus be judged by today's standards? Should we continue to celebrate Columbus Day?

### **Document A**

Source: Brinkly, Alan. American History: A Survey. "Christopher Columbus" pp. 13-14. 2008.

Christopher Columbus, who was born and reared in Genoa, Italy, obtained most of his early seafaring experience in the service of the Portuguese. As a young man, he became intrigued with the possibility, already under discussion in many seafaring circles, of reaching Asia by going not east but west. Columbus failed to win support for his plan in Portugal, so he turned to Spain. The Spaniards were not yet as advanced a maritime people as the Portuguese, but they were at least as energetic and ambitious. And in the fifteenth century, the marriage of Spain's two most powerful regional rulers, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile had produced the strongest monarchy in Europe. Like other young monarchies, it soon grew eager to demonstrate its strength by sponsoring new commercial ventures.... His [Columbus] voyages were inspired as much by his conviction that he was fulfilling a divine mission as by his interest in geography and trade. A strong believer in the biblical prophecies, he came to see himself as a man destined to advance the coming of the millennium. "God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth," he wrote near the end of his life, "and he showed me a spot where to find it."

### **Document B**

Source: Dobbs, Rebecca G. "Why we should abolish Columbus Day: A Speech." Summer 1997.

We should cease to celebrate Columbus Day, first because it is ludicrous to say a place already inhabited can be "discovered"; second because Columbus failed to add anything new to the pool of European knowledge; and finally because the celebration of Columbus sends a message of hostility to the very peoples who have paid most dearly to establish the great nation of which we are a part.

Why do I use the word "ludicrous"? Consider what it was that Columbus allegedly discovered: a vast set of lands. Estimates of the pre-Columbian population of these lands vary widely, but numbers proposed in recent years by authorities on New World demographics such as Henry Dobyns suggest some 145million people lived in the hemisphere in 1492, with some 18 million of those north of Mexico. These estimates are cited by David Stannard in his book American Holocaust as well as by others. Stannard goes on to show that this 145 million figure is roughly equal to the estimated 1492 populations of Europe, Russia, and Africa put together. Clearly, the lands visited by Columbus could not be said to be empty by any stretch of the imagination.

### **Document C**

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

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.

Expounding the strange doctrine that beyond the ocean stood solid, habitable earth, Columbus had first to make his views plausible to his doubting patrons and then to overcome the seemingly endless array of obstacles with which men of little minds barred the way to the fitting out of a fleet.

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.

This year when we contemplate the estate to which the world has been brought by destructive forces, with lawlessness and wanton power ravaging an older civilization, and with our own republic girding itself for the defense of its institutions, we can revitalize our faith and renew our courage by our collection of the triumph of Columbus after a period of grievous trial.

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. Our task is now to make strong our conviction that in spite of setbacks that process will go on toward fulfillment.

#### **Document D**

Source: Obama, Barack. "For Immediate Release: Columbus Day 2009." (Press Release). October 9, 2009.

#### **A PROCLAMATION**

More than 500 years have passed since Christopher Columbus set sail across the Atlantic Ocean in a bold attempt to expand human understanding of the known world. His voyage radically altered the course of history and changed our world forever. Many generations later, that same spirit of exploration inspires Americans to pursue brave new frontiers in business, science, and technology. Today, we reflect on the transformation of North America from a land of boundless opportunity to the modern communities of the 21st century. Columbus inspired generations of men and women to search out the farthest reaches of the world. From the coasts of Newfoundland to the Gulf of Mexico, explorers of Italian descent have directly influenced the growth of North America. Their dedication to our country has helped lay the foundation on which America was built. Today, Italian Americans continue to contribute immeasurably to the identity of our Nation, as role models, leaders, innovators, and committed public servants. From the boardroom to the classroom, they are prominent in every facet of American life...

#### **Document E**

Source: Columbus, Christopher. Letter to Queen Isabella of Spain. December 16, 1492.

...your Highnesses may believe that this island (Hispaniola), and all the others, are as much yours as Castile. Here there is only wanting a settlement and the order to the people to do what is required. For I, with the force I have under me, which is not large, could march over all these islands without opposition. I have seen only three sailors land, without wishing to do harm, and a multitude of Indians fled before them. They have no arms, and are without warlike instincts; they all go naked, and are so timid that a thousand would not stand before three of our men. So that they are good to be ordered about, to work and sow, and do all that may be necessary, and to build towns, and they should be taught to go about clothed and to adopt our customs.

#### **Document F**

Source: Bartolome de Las Casas\*, Excerpt from Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies.(1542)

Their reason for killing and destroying such an infinite number of souls is that the Christians have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold, and to swell themselves with riches in a very brief time and thus rise to a high estate disproportionate to their merits. It should be kept in mind that their insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world, is the cause of their villainies. And also, those lands are so rich and felicitous, the native peoples so meek and patient, so easy to subject, that our Spaniards have no more consideration for them than beasts. And I say this from my own knowledge of the acts I witnessed. But I should not say "than beasts" for, thanks be to God, they have treated beasts with some respect; I should say instead like excrement on the public squares. And thus they have deprived the Indians of their lives and souls, for the millions I mentioned have died without the Faith and without the benefit of the sacraments.

This is a well-known and proven fact which even the tyrant Governors, themselves killers, know and admit. And never have the Indians in all the Indies committed any act against the Spanish Christians, until those Christians have first and many times committed countless cruel aggressions against them or against neighboring nations. For in the beginning the Indians regarded the Spaniards as angels from Heaven. Only after the Spaniards had used violence against them, killing, robbing, torturing, did the Indians ever rise up against them....

\*Bartoleme De Las Casas (b. 1484, d. 1566), a Spanish colonist, a priest, and first Bishop of Chiapas, was a scholar, historian and 16th century human rights advocate. Las Casas was a nearly and energetic advocate and activist for the rights of native peoples. Las Casas came to the Indies early, he knew Columbus and was the editor of his journal. He knew conditions in the Americas first hand.

### **Document G**

Source: Dr. G. Symcox. Professor of History at UCLA in "Columbus' Search for Gold" video. History Channel. 2013.

The first day he encounters the Indians he talks about what good slaves they would make. He takes the Indians who come to him to trade and he captures them and he keeps them. Columbus was a man of his time. Like the settlers, Columbus was there to make money. He was not too particular about the ways he chose to make money because that's the way that people behaved. There was a flourishing slave trade in Europe in the Middle Ages. Slavery was a customary product of European society. It didn't seem in anyway unnatural for Columbus and the other settlers to do this.

### **Document H**

Source: Zinn, Howard. Professor of History and Author. A People's History of the United States. 1980.

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 than when it comes from politicians at press conferences. It is therefore more deadly.

### **Directions:**

In addition to the excerpts provided, you will need to find a minimum of two primary sources and two secondary sources to gain more understanding and information about Columbus. Look for information shedding light on multiple perspectives and opinions about Columbus to get a better understanding of points and counterpoints.

After researching, you will need to construct a well-developed essay that answers the DBQ Question from the top of page 1. You will need to include a bibliography in MLA format for the additional sources you include in your writing. You will need to use rich quotes and in-text citations.

**Due Date:      Friday, October 28**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Stem	Claim	
	Evidence/Source	Evidence/Source
	Claim	
	Evidence/Source	Evidence/Source
	Claim	
	Evidence/Source	Evidence/Source