



1st Term Columbus Controversy Project – Celebrate his Contributions or Not?

Description/Overview- Create a research booklet in which you discuss 3 items pertaining to the controversy surrounding Columbus. For each item you will provide a summary of the item, your analysis/commentary on that item, and source information for the item.)

Research Booklet Instructions:

Following the guidelines about how to search for information that you will receive during our history class visit to the library (October 6), you will select 3 items for your research booklet by searching through various social science databases, on-line journals, newspapers, and the Internet. The items you choose must pertain to the controversy surrounding the celebration of Columbus Day and the celebration of Columbus as an historical figure in general. In particular, you will find lots of controversy surrounding the celebrations that were planned for the 1992 Quincentenary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Clearly some people think Columbus should be celebrated--for his valuable contributions to history, and others feel that he should not be celebrated—also because of what he contributed (but, in a negative way.) You should choose articles that clearly take a position on the issue one way or the other. For each article that you select, be sure that you are able to clearly identify what opinion the person writing the article has about whether Columbus should be celebrated or not. Do not choose articles that merely give information about Columbus. Do not choose news accounts in which it is difficult for you to discern the opinion of the writer on the issue. You must print out each article you choose and include the copy in your booklet.

1. Write about the 3 Research Items - For each of the 3 research items provide the following:

a. Written Summary –

A brief descriptive summary of the item's content matter—explain the claim the author of the article is making about the Columbus controversy. Remember: Do not choose an article that doesn't express a clear opinion on the controversy.

b. Written Analysis & Commentary –

Analysis: Analyze the author's claims. Does the author make their case well or not? Why or why not? Do *not* get into a discussion about how “well written” an article is or how “interesting” it is—I’m not interested in your views on the author’s writing skills. Rather, you should identify those elements of their supporting data that you found most and least persuasive and explain *why* this is the case. Basically, you are taking apart and critiquing their arguments. Note: MAKE SURE YOU ARE NOT STILL SUMMARIZING HERE.

Commentary: You will end up making your own argument about Columbus relative to what the author claimed in the article. In other words, express *your own* opinion about the opinion that the author expressed. Say why you think this is the case. Don’t hesitate to draw on outside things that we’ve read. (Hint, hint: Howard Zinn’s article....)

c. Written Source Information –

For each particular item provide source information. In addition, write a brief paragraph that goes beyond identifying where this item came from. In other words don’t simply give a web address. Rather, as we discussed in class, give greater detail about who this source is and how they are connected to the Columbus Controversy. *Why* is this particular source presenting this particular information? You will not receive full credit if you only provide background on where the item came from and fail to discuss the intent of those who generated it!

d. Hard Copy of each Article –

Provide a copy of each article you use.

2. Conclusion Essays:

Kammen Essay & Background: Your context for understanding the essay assignment is the Michael Kammen article we read in class about the “creation” of Columbus as an American “hero.” Remember that faced with the reluctance of founding fathers to be *undemocratically* idealized, the nation seized upon the figure of Columbus to fill the void. Columbus was seen as an intrepid explorer who left Europe and imperial rule behind like the colonists had (although, in reality he had not left imperial rule behind, but was, in fact, working for the King and Queen of Spain!) Columbus’s hero status came from *romanticized* biographies written in the 1800s detailing what he had accomplished. Much of what was written had little bearing on the actual facts. These glorified portrayals, written long after Columbus’ time, were more a reflection of the young nation’s efforts in the mid 1800s to forge a strong sense of national identity, than they were about Columbus, or his actual deeds. Later, in the 1990s, as public perceptions shifted again, now towards greater cynicism, Columbus began to be viewed with outright *disapproval*. The protests that arose in response to the planned 1992 Quincentenary celebrations, Kammen reminds us, again reflected at least as much, (if not more), about our own particular sentiments in the 1990s as they did about Columbus himself. Thus, you will want to be mindful as you are analyzing and assessing the various perspectives that you include in your booklet, that all historical perspectives are filtered in part through the historian’s particular biases that stem from their own location in time.

Instructions: Write a one to two page conclusion essay that summarizes the Kammen article. Your essay should critique their arguments and express your own opinion. Be sure to say *why* you have this opinion. Support your opinion by offering details and facts from the article. Also draw on the various materials you have researched to support your claims. Make sure your essay explains Kammen’s basic message. How does Kammen’s article factor into your thinking about Columbus?

Sale & Royal Debate Essay: Write an essay that describes the arguments advance by both Sale and Royal about whether or not Columbus was an Imperialist. What did you learn about the Taino Indians from the debate? What, if anything, did Sale’s discussion of the Taino Indians as compared to the Europeans (in the Sale Royal debate), add to your thinking about what is necessary for a fulfilling life? What did you learn from this project? What questions remain open? How would you connect the questions that were raised to the concerns of contemporary society? Give your essay a title that summarizes your views.