

Documents: Columbus

Name: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Analyze the document. Each problem has one answer unless stated otherwise.

Background: Christopher Columbus believed by sailing west he would eventually find China and the Great Kahn. Hoping to open direct trade with Asia before other European powers, the monarchs of Spain financed Columbus' first of four voyages. In 1492, weeks after setting sail, Columbus landed in the present-day Caribbean Islands. He believed he was near Japan. Columbus explored several islands, met and traded with the inhabitants, and planned for a better equipped second voyage. Columbus' journal from the first voyage disappeared; however, copied portions of the journal by Bartolomé de Las Casas survived. It is known that Las Casas sometimes paraphrased Columbus' writings.

Friday, 12th of October

All [Natives] I saw were youths, none more than thirty years of age. They are very well made with very handsome bodies, and very good countenances. Their hair is short and coarse, almost like the hairs of a horsetail. They wear the hairs brought down to the eyebrows except a few locks behind, which they wear long and never cut. They paint themselves black, and they are the color of the Canarians, neither black nor white. Some paint themselves white, others red, and others of what color they find. Some paint their faces, others the whole body, some only round the eyes, others only on the nose. They neither care nor know anything of arms, for I showed them swords, and they took them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance. They have no iron, their darts being wands without iron, some of them having a fish's tooth at the end, and others being pointed in various ways. They are all of fair stature and size, with good faces, and well made. I saw some with marks of wounds on their bodies, and I made signs to ask what it was, and they gave me to understand that people from other adjacent islands came with the intention of seeing them, and that they defended themselves. I believe and still

believe, that they come here from the mainland to take them prisoners. They should be good servants and intelligent, for I observed that they quickly took in what was said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians, as it appeared to me that they had no religion. I, our Lord being pleased, will take hence, at the time of my departure, six natives for your Highnesses, that they may learn to speak.

Saturday, 13th of October

They brought skeins of cotton thread, parrots, darts, and other small things which it would be tedious to recount, and they give all in exchange for anything that may be given to them. I was attentive, and took trouble to ascertain if there was gold. I saw that some of them had a small piece fastened in a hole they have in the nose, and by signs I was able to make out that to the south, or going from the island to the south, there was a king who had great cups full, and who possessed a great quantity. I tried to get them to go there, but afterwards I saw that they had no inclination. I resolved to wait until to-morrow in the afternoon and then to depart....

Cristóbal Colon

Central Ideas. A central idea is the overall topic of the entire piece.

1. What is the central idea of the Columbus entry from 12 October?

- E. Columbus describes his encounter with the local Natives.
- H. Some Natives had battle wounds even though they had simplistic weapons.
- O. Columbus has a great interest in gold.
- Y. The Natives will make great Christians and servants.

Words in Context. Define words based upon how they are used in the writing.

“They neither care nor know anything of arms, for I showed them swords, and they took them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance.”

2. What does the word “arms” mean as it is used in the quote above?

- D. limbs
- I. wounds
- R. weapons
- W stupidity

Reading for Understanding. Answer the questions about the article.

3. Why does Columbus believe the natives have little understanding of weapons?

- E. it appeared that the Natives had no iron
- H. many of the Natives painted themselves
- O. Natives grabbed the swords by the blade and cut themselves
- Y. some Natives were very tall

4. What led Columbus to believe the Natives were not always peaceful?

- E. some Natives had wounds on their bodies
- H. Natives grabbed swords by the blade
- O. a few Natives painted themselves red
- Y. some Natives wore nose rings

5. From his observations, Columbus sees the Spanish doing two things to the Natives? Circle two choices.

- E. make Christians of the Natives
- H. show the Natives how to defend themselves against enemies
- O. make the Natives servants
- Y. trade furs with the Natives in exchange for European goods

6. What information about gold did Columbus get from the Natives?

- E. gold nose rings protected the wearer from spirits
- H. many Natives painted themselves gold
- O. there was a king to the South with cups of gold
- Y. gold mines existed in the northern mainland