

Should or Shouldn't We Celebrate Columbus Day?

UNIT 4

THE YEAR 1492 MARKS THE END OF PARADISE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH'S GARDEN OF EDEN.

STANDARDS

I. Culture

- a. Compare similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures meet human needs and concerns.
- b. Explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
- d. Explain why individuals and groups respond differently to their physical and social environments and/or changes to them on the basis of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs.
- e. Articulate the implications of cultural diversity, as well as cohesion, within and across groups.

IV. Individual Development and Identity

- f. Identify and describe the influence of perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs on personal identity.
- h. Work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals.

V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

- b. Analyze group and institutional influences on people, events, and elements of culture.
- f. Describe the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change.
- g. Apply knowledge about how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good.

VI. Power, Authority, and Governance

- h. Explain and apply concepts such as power, role, status, justice, and influence to the examination of persistent issues and social problems.
- i. Give examples and explain how governments attempt to achieve their stated ideals at home and abroad.

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STANDARDS

VIII. Science, Technology, and Society

- c. Describe examples in which values, beliefs, and attitudes have been influenced by new scientific and technological knowledge, such as the invention of the printing press, conceptions of the universe, applications of atomic energy, and genetic disorders.

IX. Global Connections

- b. Analyze examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations.
- c. Describe and analyze the effects of changing technologies on the global community.
- d. Explore the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to persistent contemporary, and emerging global issues, such as health, security, resource allocation, economic development, and environmental quality.
- e. Describe and explain the relationships and tensions between national sovereignty and global interests in such matters as territory, natural resources, trade, use of technology, and welfare of people.

X. Civic Ideals and Practices

- c. Locate, access, analyze, organize, and apply information about selected public issues—recognizing and explaining multiple points of view.
- d. Practice forms of civic discussion and participation consistent with the ideals of citizens in a democratic republic.
- e. Explain and analyze various forms of citizen action that influence public policy decisions.
- g. Analyze the influence of diverse forms of public opinion on the development of public policy and decision making.
- j. Examine strategies designed to strengthen the “common good,” which consider the range of options for citizen action.

Simulation Four: Lobbyist Hearing on the Celebration of Columbus Day

The great ones in history suffer the same fate at the hands of historians. Yesterday's hero, he who was the chosen of the gods, the knight in shining armor, the high and the mighty, who was worshiped and the object of adulation, can just as suddenly become today's scoundrel.

That seems to be the fate of Christopher Columbus. Little thought is given today to his daring exploit when it was considered madness to voyage out into the open sea beyond the sight of land, steering the prows of his small fleet westward into uncharted and unknown waters.

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Simulation Four: Lobbyist Hearing on the Celebration of Columbus Day (cont.)

Setting the Stage

Students will simulate a congressional hearing, listening to five different lobbyist groups to help them understand all points of view so that they can vote on the continuation of Columbus Day.

1. Explain the activity by telling the students the following: Columbus is recognized by many as one of the greatest of navigators and explorers of the age of discovery. You are asked to prepare a statement supporting a specific group in front of a congressional hearing. You are taking the role of a lobbyist. You are to help the committee determine whether or not the United States should continue to celebrate Columbus Day.
2. Separate the class into five distinct lobbyist groups and assign each group a different point of view. They are to research this question from that point of view.

Points of View

- Cheng Ho, a great Chinese explorer who voyaged all over Southeast Asia
- Scandinavian Vikings, who sailed the oceans prior to Columbus
- Native Americans, such as the Carib Indians from the Caribbean Islands, who had lived in the New World for many years
- Christopher Columbus, explorer in search of a new all-water route to Asia
- Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese explorer, who discovered the all-water route around Africa to India

3. Describe the lobbying simulation to the students: The class will be divided into five groups, each taking a different point of view of a controversial issue—in this case, whether or not the United States should celebrate Columbus Day. Each group will research that viewpoint and/or be given handouts and will have to write key issues on index cards. These key issues will cue them as to what to say before a congressional hearing committee. Each student will be given one key issue to cover. The major objective of every group is to compose a speech that, from the very first words, captivates the audience, holds their attention, and pulls them to their group's side. The last speaker is just as important, for when this person is finished, the listeners should be in the lobbyists' pocket. It is every group's job to sway the committee to its way of thinking, using persuasive speech and intelligent arguments, so that when the congressional representatives vote, they will vote for those who spoke most persuasively.

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Simulation Four: Lobbyist Hearing on the Celebration of Columbus Day (cont.)

Setting the Stage (cont.)

- Negotiable Contracting of Rubric Criteria—Ask students to place themselves in the position of the teacher. Now that they have a good idea of the task, what criteria should be used for grading the simulation? Allow students to brainstorm criteria in their cooperative groups. The teacher lists the results on large chart paper as a reference guide, which can be posted in a visible area of the classroom. Determine how much each section is worth toward the entire grade. (**Note:** The Rubric Bank on pages H-37 through H-78 provides sample criteria for possible rubrics to use for this assessment exercise.)

Sample

- The group addresses key issues in their speeches.
- The first person's speech grabs the audience.
- The group's speeches are sequenced well.
- The last person's speech leaves the audience with something to think about.
- Good eye contact is maintained.
- Speeches are persuasive and to the point.

Preparing the Lobbyists

- Begin by breaking the class into cooperative groups with five students in each group. Call each cooperative group a "home-base group." Designate each student within the group as letter A, B, C, D, or E. There should be an equal number of students within every home-base group. Assign the lobbying roles to students A, B, C, D, and E.
- "Jigsaw" the class into new groups. Ask all As to sit together, all Bs, etc. This way you will be dividing the class into five major lobbying groups. Letters will lobby for their particular cause. In this case, A students could represent Cheng-Ho; B, the Scandinavian Vikings; C, the Native Americans; D, Christopher Columbus; and E, Vasco da Gama.

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Simulation Four: Lobbyist Hearing on the Celebration of Columbus Day *(cont.)*

Preparing the Lobbyists *(cont.)*

3. In advance of the simulation, ask students to read all of the profiles in the student handbook (EA-33 through EA-42, EB-30 through EB-34) in class or for homework. Have students highlight the essential points of their assigned roles with a marker. These profiles are brief summaries drawn from history. Encourage students to do individual research beyond the information in the handbook. They may use the classroom library or different centers in the classroom where the teacher has placed resource materials, primary sources, trade books, textbooks, CD-ROM applications, or access to the Internet. To simply mouth phrases from the handout is self-defeating. If they haven't ventured beyond the handout material, they have gained very little from the lesson. It is the individual research, discovering and understanding the essential facts, and becoming a true believer in a cause which give the speaker the passion and the drive to score his or her points and win over the audience.
4. In their lobbying groups, students discuss what they individually highlighted. They share the information culled from their research sources. They now become "experts."
5. Jigsaw the students back into their original home-base groups so one student from each expert lobbying group is represented in the home-base group. Students share their expert knowledge with the others in the group. This is important as it gives every student an opportunity to prepare for their expert lobbying groups.
6. Jigsaw students back into their expert lobbying groups. On paper, have students generate a list of notable points under the heading titled Brainstorming Key Issues. Include the following information: point of view, ideas for key issues, and issues to be covered (placed in order). Every idea that is generated is listed without making any judgment about its validity. Allow students five minutes to complete the task. Timing students will increase their productivity.
7. Once they have shared their ideas, students decide which issues they should cover. They then decide the sequence or order and write that on their brainstorming paper. Students discuss which issues should come first, second, and last during their speeches. Emphasize to the class that the first person must make a powerful opening speech. This begins the buildup to the last person's keynote address, which should leave a lasting impression.

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Simulation Four: Lobbyist Hearing on the Celebration of Columbus Day *(cont.)*

Preparing the Lobbyists *(cont.)*

8. Distribute 3" x 5" (8 cm x 13 cm) index cards to all students. Ask each student to take on one or two points from the list and write a 30-second to one-minute speech, first on scratch paper. (As an option, the teacher may wish to ask the students to write a formal speech where the writing process is used.) Obviously, each student should have different point(s) to make before the Congress. Each student constructs a speech to win the listener over through persuasion, by using a good introduction so that Congress will listen, working on emotions to get them involved, and emphasizing facts to substantiate the point(s).

Once the speech is written, the student highlights the essential words. Only the essential words may be written on index cards. The teacher must make sure that students do not write out their speeches in full sentences on the index cards. This will prevent them from reading off a card. Tell students that you will be grading them not only on the content of their speeches but also on presentation. Review the criteria for assessment: persuasive speech, presentation skills, and proper sequencing ability. Ask your students to generate a list of what makes a good speech: clearly making good eye contact, punctuating important points by using different tones of voice, and showing that you care about what you are saying by displaying personal interest and emotion. Students may wish to add a background song, a chart, a picture, gestures or body language, or a drawing to embellish their speeches. If students have the passion for their cause, they will carry the audience with them. If they can do that, they'll carry the day.

9. Pull one student from each group. These students will now form the panel that will hear the groups. To avoid a tie, make sure that there is an odd number of students. At the end of the simulation, this group will vote and make a decision. As each student is pulled, his or her index card is given back to the lobbying group, which must now incorporate those points into its speeches. This structure provides for a well-balanced panel, containing members from all different points of view who have expert knowledge. However, the members of the panel are now told to discuss their views with each other and abandon their original biases. They must now serve impartially, as they are being called upon to render a decision. While the rest of the lobbying groups practice, the students on the panel discuss their positions and collectively write open-ended questions that they hope will be answered. It is important to give them time to bond as a group in their new role.
10. While the congressional group is working together, the other groups practice their speaking skills as they take on their roles as lobbyists who try to convince or persuade Congress of their way of thinking. The teacher circulates from group to group, giving assistance.

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Simulation Four: Lobbyist Hearing on the Celebration of Columbus Day (cont.)

The Hearing

1. Have the congressional committee sit in front of the room behind desks, with notepaper and pens or pencils to take notes and to jot down questions they might want to ask of each lobbying group. Each congressional member stands up and states his or her name to set the stage.
2. To begin the simulation, the teacher announces the date, time, and location of the hearing, as well as the issue that is about to be heard.
3. Call on one lobbying group at a time. Ask them to stand at the side of the room, facing the rest of the class in the order they will be giving their speeches. This way, the rest of the class can see their faces as well as the committee's faces and clearly hear the presentations.
4. Before they begin to speak, the first speaker in the group states the person and the special interest group or cause they are representing.
5. Each member gets a turn to speak. This lesson, the lobbying enactment, can also serve as an opportunity for the teacher to observe speaking skills, knowledge of subject matter, and the effectiveness of each student to lobby for his or her cause.
6. As students listen to other groups, they fill in the chart in their handbooks (EA-43, EB-35), writing descriptive phrases about the performance of each group of lobbyists. This is used as a form of peer assessment.
7. At the end of their addresses, the congressional committee asks follow-up questions. Each panel member should be required to ask at least one open-ended question of the lobbyists, focusing on one speaker, to encourage full participation of the class.
8. Repeat the process with the rest of the lobbying groups.

The Decision

1. In private, the committee discusses what they have heard. They need to render a decision and state reasons for that decision.
2. At the same time, the rest of the lobbyists quietly write down their predictions as to what the committee will decide.
3. A committee member stands up and announces the decision of the panel.
4. The teacher collects the charts to assess how well each student paid attention.

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Simulation Four: Lobbyist Hearing on the Celebration of Columbus Day *(cont.)*

Charting the Results

1. Tell the students that they are now the public and have heard the congressional committee render its decision. They are no longer lobbyists; this has become a personal decision. Ask all of the students to get back into their home-base groups, their original groups before they were sectioned off to a particular point of view. Inform the groups that they will be given enough time to brainstorm all of the possible solutions to the controversy. They should discuss whether they agree with the congressional committee's decision or whether they formulated a decision that was far better than anything else offered as a solution.
2. The teacher asks the class for the different decisions that emerged in the cooperative groups. The teacher creates a chart with the issues. Then the instructor takes a class vote on each decision and charts the results on a bar graph.
3. For homework, students should write their reflections on the experience and discuss whether or not they agreed or disagreed with of the decisions.

Analyzing the Government

1. Now that students have had the opportunity to be lobbyists and analyze one another's performances, ask them to find out what lobbying is going on in their own local, state, or national government. Oftentimes, cable television channels air congressional debates and speeches where the lobbying technique is used. Some students may wish to view Court Television to observe the techniques that are used there.
2. Distribute another piece of chart paper and ask the students to fill in their responses to what they view on television.
3. Hold a class discussion on what they have analyzed. You may wish to chart the results.

Reflecting on the Simulation

Have students write about their impressions of the simulation and their conclusions about Columbus' place in history (EA-44, EB-36 through EB-38).