Christopher Columbus: Hero or Villain? Diving Deeper with Historical Artifacts and Text Analysis  
by Mackie Greaser

**Introduction/Background:** As students begin to analyze and examine the images and videos, it is very important to remind them that these were created much later than the time period being discussed: when Columbus was already mythologized and before his accomplishments were evaluated by those who revealed the cultural destruction he set in motion.

You should also emphasize that people and artifacts are products of their time. What was acceptable in the past may no longer be seen as appropriate and vice versa. Part of understanding the people of history is coming to understand the morals and values of the time in which you are studying. Concepts that were morally and economically acceptable in the past would not necessarily be seen as acceptable in present day.

- Students should be familiar with the Material Culture Analysis Worksheet and have used it to analyze historical artifacts.
- Students should be familiar with Christopher Columbus and have a basic knowledge of some of his accomplishments.
- The YouTube video below will help the children learn about some of his accomplishments.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGtIHZMr0vQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGtIHZMr0vQ)

**Grade Level & Academic Discipline:** 5–8 English Language Arts and/or Social Studies

**Learning outcomes:**

Students will:

- Analyze several types of historical of media and text to deepen their understanding of a specific historical event from different perspectives.
- Write an argumentative essay that explains motivations behind the European Exploration, specifically those of C.C., as understood from examining primary and secondary sources. (This is the Individual Assessment you may choose.)
- Integrate visual information
- Create a presentation using the information gained. (This is the Group Assessment you may choose.)

**Time Required:** 3 Days; 45 minutes -1 hour each day

**Materials/Resources**

- Computer(s)
- Attachments included in this lesson plan: Material Cultural Analysis Graphic Organizer, Reciprocal Teaching Student Information, Reciprocal Teaching Activity Graphic Organizer,
painting ‘Christopher Columbus Leaving for the New World’, drawing below ‘Columbus in Chains’, Close Reading Graphic Organizer, various websites mentioned in this lesson plan, Paper Slide Show Rubric, ‘Defend or Prosecute’ Response Rubric.

- Lined paper
- Pencils
- Printer paper for the Paper Slide Show if you choose this assessment.
- Please note that the resources you will need are attached below the day you will need to utilize them.

Activities:

DAY 1: THE ARTIFACTS

- Begin the lesson allowing students to examine 16th century navigational tools that Columbus used on his four voyages to the New World.
- Introduce the Material Culture Analysis Worksheet and explain how it is used to analyze artifacts from any historical time period as well as those who used and made the artifact. Depending on the level of your students you may what to review the questions using a common household object from today in a whole class discussion format. Now that they have had practice and know your expectations, you can move on to the artifacts below.
- Students may be grouped in various ways at the discretion of the teacher or conducted using a whole class method. (Note: If you choose the whole class method it may take a few more days than previously stated.)
- Allow students to view the artifacts (log line, astrolabe, and traverse board) and complete the Material Culture Analysis Graphic Organizer. Below you will find the link to the Mariners Museum where photographs and explanations of each artifact can be found. http://ageofex.marinersmuseum.org/index.php?page=tools
- Allow students to share their information with the class. Conduct a class discussion identifying the artifacts if the students have not come to final conclusions and discuss how they were used to navigate the seas.
- Use the rubric to judge whether students were successful in gaining insight into the artifacts.
Material Culture Analysis Worksheet: Object # __________________

Image or URL as needed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics:</th>
<th>Interpretations:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What can you tell about this object’s:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Materials?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Design?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Age?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Value?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function:</th>
<th>Interpretations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is its intended purpose?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would one use it?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context:</th>
<th>Interpretations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does it tell you about the people who made it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does it tell you about those people who used it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what time period would this object be used?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under what circumstances was it used?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison:</th>
<th>Interpretations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do we use something similar today? If so, what?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Thoughts:</th>
<th>Interpretations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What else would you like to know about this object?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else you observe?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Makes a complete and detailed description of an object's physical characteristics, including materials, design, age, and value, using guided questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Theorizes several functional elements of an object and reasonably describes its intended use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation</strong></td>
<td>Forms a reasonable hypothesis about an object's historical or cultural connections, and is able to support this with evidence from the object.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusions</strong></td>
<td>Uses historical sources, evidence, and analysis to draw conclusions about an object's past and present significance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DAY 2: THE ART!

Reciprocal Teaching Activity (1)

- **Preparation:** Run Reciprocal Teaching Activity back to back so it can be used for both activities. That way, students will have their responses readily available for use throughout the remainder of the unit if needed.
- Discuss the following sections of the Reciprocal Teaching Activity Graphic Organizer with students before you begin the activity.
  - **STEP 1: SUMMARIZE:** Students are to view the painting and complete the sections labeled ‘People, Actions, and Objects.’ Students are to write everything they see in the painting into the graphic organizer. They also need to complete the three questions under this first section.
  - **STEP 2: QUESTION:** As students look at the painting, they formulate questions. All questions need to be written in this section. If students are struggling, model the metacognition that occurs when you view a painting, e.g. Why did the artist do X?
  - **STEP 3: CLARIFY:** Have the students look more closely at the painting. They may need prompting or modeling that focuses them on the expressions on the faces of those in the painting, the colors, etc. in order to make a few statements in this section.
  - **STEP 4: PREDICT:** Now students need to make a prediction about what the painting is depicting.
- Use painting below ‘Christopher Columbus Leaving for the New World’ and allow students time to complete the Reciprocal Teaching Activity in pairs.
- [www.sonofthesouth.net](http://www.sonofthesouth.net) :This link will take you to the website so you can review the information about the painting and his voyage.

Source: [www.sonofthesouth.net](http://www.sonofthesouth.net)
Reciprocal Teaching Activity (2)

- Allow students to turn the graphic organizer over and repeat the previous activity in pairs with a different piece of artwork. Use the drawing below, ‘Columbus in Chains’, to complete the organizer.
- More than likely students will wonder why Columbus is in chains. With sensitivity in mind explain that he was accused of treating the Natives on the islands he discovered very badly. Explain that they will be learning more about this as they continue to dig for the evidence in order to answer the historical question.
- Allow students to come together as a whole class and debrief the similarities and differences in the two pieces of artwork.
- Ask students if they have enough evidence to answer the historical question with 100% accuracy. They should say that they need more evidence in order to gain more knowledge in order to do this. Leading questions will help them understand that tomorrow they will be presented with more information in the form of a video.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RECIPROCAL TEACHING QUESTIONS</strong></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When <strong>SUMMARIZING</strong>…</strong></td>
<td><strong>When <strong>QUESTIONING</strong>…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What specific details do I</td>
<td>What do I want/need to know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observe?</td>
<td>more about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of source in this?</td>
<td>What does this mean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What appears to be the</td>
<td>What does this source have to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>main idea?</td>
<td>do with the essential question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When <strong>CLARIFYING</strong>…</strong></td>
<td><strong>When <strong>PREDICTING</strong>…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do I not understand</td>
<td>How might other perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about the source?</td>
<td>be different?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did the author make</td>
<td>What other information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the choices he/she did?</td>
<td>might this source uncover?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the purpose of this</td>
<td>Will this be enough evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source?</td>
<td>to answer the investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>question?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name________________________
Reciprocal Teaching Activity

Step 1: Summarize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Objects</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What type of document is this?

Is this a primary or secondary source? How do you know?

What is the main idea of the text?

**Step 2: Question:**

**Step 3: Clarify**

**Step 4: Predict**

How will this text help better understand the historical event?
DAY 3: THE SHOW!

- Again, remind students of the historical question **Should Christopher Columbus be remembered for his discoveries or his destruction?**
- Tell them that they are about to take notes in a special way while watching a. Tell them that they will watch the video three times. (Not to worry, it’s only a few minutes long.) They will watch the video the first time looking and listening for key details. When the video is over they will be allowed to write the details into the graphic organizer. Next, they will watch the video a second time and listen for text structures. Then they will be given time to write the text structures they notice. Lastly, they will watch the video a third and final time looking and listening for corroboration and perspective. Explain that they will be looking for things that are similar to the information they have seen in other texts. They also need to write down any new information they gained as well as things that they believe were left out. Make sure they understand that they are NOT to take notes while watching the video only AFTER each viewing!
- Pass out the Close Reading Graphic Organizer and have them write the historical question in the first section.
- Watch the video link below three times allowing them time to write their thoughts in between. **Note: you will have to read the script presented in the video out loud to your students each time.**
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKT_a40FcKA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKT_a40FcKA)
- At the end allow them to complete the final section on the graphic organizer.
- Allow them time to complete the questions.
- Assess them for understanding and a possible grade. This investigation of Christopher Columbus is designed to take them deeper into the art of analysis and evaluation.
Close Reading Guide

**Investigation Question:**

**First Read: Key Details**
1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________
4. ______________________
5. ______________________

**Second Read: Text Structure**
- Was the information in the text... chronological? cause and effect? comparative?
- How do you know?

**Third Read: Corroboration and Perspective**
- What information in this text was *similar* to information in other texts you have analyzed?
- What information did the author *omit* in comparison to other texts you have analyzed?
- As the viewer, what information/perspectives are still needed to help you complete your investigation? (Consider what the author omitted?)

- What *new* information did the author present?

**Write your response to the Investigation Question with evidence from the text?**
Assessment: PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS A CHOICE OF TWO ASSESSMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN DEPENDING UPON THE TIME AVAILABLE.

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT: ‘Prosecute or Defend’

Christopher Columbus is on trial for crimes of destruction and genocide. Choose to be either the lawyer prosecuting or defending Columbus, and prepare an opening statement for the trial in which you explain your position. Be sure to use at least 5 documents from this investigation as evidence. Write your opening statement on a piece of lined paper. Be sure to identify yourself as the prosecuting or defense attorney. Use at least 2-3 documents that we have discussed in your statement. You may use any notes you have taken as well as all your graphic organizers.

- Allow them time to write their opening statements. This should only be a concise paragraph of the main ideas presenting their argument for or against Columbus.
## ‘Defend or Prosecute’ One Paragraph Essay Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic Sentence</strong></td>
<td>The paragraph has a clear and thoughtful topic sentence that refers to the main idea of the question or assigned topic.</td>
<td>The topic sentence contains the main idea of the question or assigned topic.</td>
<td>The topic sentence is relatively clear and addresses the main point fairly well.</td>
<td>There is no clear topic sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Body/Supporting Sentences</strong></td>
<td>The paragraph contains at least three sentences that support the main idea with reasons, details or facts. The details are well organized, interesting and elaborate on the main topic of the paragraph.</td>
<td>The paragraph contains at least three supporting sentences. The details in these sentences elaborate on the main topic fairly well.</td>
<td>The paragraph contains a few supporting sentences that support the main idea.</td>
<td>The paragraph contains no clear supporting sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>The conclusion wraps up the paragraph and refers to the main idea without repeating it.</td>
<td>The conclusion wraps up the paragraph fairly well and refers to the main idea.</td>
<td>The conclusion repeats the introduction.</td>
<td>There is no evidence of a conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates correct spelling, correct use of punctuation and capitalization. Precise use of grammar and vocabulary. Work is legible and correctly formatted (formatting = 12pt font, double-spaced, Times New Roman font). Draft is error-free.</td>
<td>Spelling, punctuation and capitalization errors occur but do not detract from the overall quality of the essay. Contains some minor grammar errors. Few vocabulary words are misused or inaccurate. Evidence of revision and proofreading is obvious. One or more mistakes are made in formatting.</td>
<td>Some spelling, punctuation and capitalization errors occur that detract from the overall quality of the essay. Occasional grammar errors. Vocabulary words are misused or inaccurate. Evidence of revision and proofreading is less apparent. Two or more mistakes are made in formatting.</td>
<td>Frequent misspelled words, misused or missing punctuation and capitalization greatly detract from the overall quality and understanding of the essay. Frequent grammar errors. Vocabulary words are misused. No evidence of revision and proofreading. Formatting is incorrect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GROUP ASSESSMENT:

- Watch the following video from YouTube to learn how to make a Paper Slide Video.
  
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qf6L1PTG3p4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qf6L1PTG3p4)
- Review the directions of the group project by discussing the rubric.
- Allow time for students to discuss, create and practice their video. This may take a day or two for them to complete. You may want to assign the pictures to be drawn at home.
- Use a flip camera or other video device to film the slide shows.
- Share them with the class and/or upload them to YouTube.

Paper Slide Video Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of slides</td>
<td>Paper slide included at least 8-10 slides.</td>
<td>Paper slide included at least 6-7 slides.</td>
<td>Paper slide included at least 4-5 slides.</td>
<td>Paper slide included 3 or less slides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity and Neatness</td>
<td>Paper slide is easy to read and all elements are clearly written, labeled, and drawn. Creativity was used.</td>
<td>Paper slide is easy to read and most elements are clearly written, labeled, and drawn. Some creativity was used.</td>
<td>Paper slide is hard to read with rough drawings, labels, and color. Little creativity was used.</td>
<td>Paper slide is hard to read and one cannot tell what goes where or what the illustrations represent. No creativity was used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>All content is in the student’s own words and is accurate. The historical question has been answered fully depending of the consensus of your group.</td>
<td>Almost all content is in the student’s own words and is accurate. The historical question has been answered by your group.</td>
<td>At least half of the content is in the student’s own words and is fairly accurate. The historical question has not been answered fully.</td>
<td>Less than half of the content is in the student’s own words and is somewhat accurate. The historical answer has not been answered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness</td>
<td>The paper slide video is clearly rehearsed/narrated, and no mistakes are heard.</td>
<td>The paper slide video is rehearsed/narrated, and 1 mistake is heard.</td>
<td>The paper slide video is somewhat rehearsed/narrated, and 2 mistakes are heard.</td>
<td>The paper slide video is not rehearsed, and they are many mistakes heard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOLLOW UP OR EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Students may construct a three-dimensional piece of artwork depicting one aspect of what they have learned.
- Write a 5-paragraph essay answering the historical question. State how you arrived at your answer and use evidence supported from the text in your essay.
- Students can learn more about the navigational tools used by Columbus and there are printouts for students to make some of them for a project.
- [http://clio.missouristate.edu/chuchiak/HST%20350--Theme%208--Navigational_tools_used_by_Columbus.htm](http://clio.missouristate.edu/chuchiak/HST%20350--Theme%208--Navigational_tools_used_by_Columbus.htm)

Standards:

**Fifth Grade Common Core Standards for Language Arts:**

**Craft and Structure**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

**Key Ideas and Details**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.3 Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.5 Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.6 Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.7 Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.8 Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably

**Reading Informational Text**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.6 Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.
Comprehension and Collaboration

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1c Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1d Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

Fifth Grade CCS for Writing Apply to the Individual Assessment if chosen by the teacher.

Text Types and Purposes

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1a Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer’s purpose.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1b Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1c Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1d Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented

Production and Distribution of Writing

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9b Apply grade 5 Reading standards to informational texts (e.g., “Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point[s]”).
Sixth through Eighth Grade CCS for Social Studies: (See related Common Core ELA Standards for your grade level if necessary.)

Key Ideas and Details

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.3 Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

Craft and Structure

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9 Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

6.H.1 Use historical thinking to understand the emergence, expansion and decline of civilizations, societies and regions over time.

6.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.

7.H.1 Use historical thinking to analyze various modern societies.

H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.