

# Two Worlds Collide

## Europe's Encounter with the Americas

*Europeans made sense of their encounter with the Americas in contrasting ways.*



## *Debating* the DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints  
in Primary Source Documents

# Two Worlds Collide

## Europe's Encounter with the Americas

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The 2017 World History Course and Exam Description of the College Board Advanced Placement Program\* lists five themes that it urges teachers to use in organizing their teaching. Each World History *Debating the Documents* booklet focuses on one or two of these five themes.

### *The Five Themes*

- 1. Interaction between humans and the environment.** (demography and disease; migration; patterns of settlement; technology)
- 2. Development and interaction of cultures.** (religions; belief systems, philosophies, and ideologies; science and technology; the arts and architecture)
- 3. State-building, expansion, and conflict.** (political structures and forms of governance; empires; nations and nationalism; revolts and revolutions; regional, transregional, and global structures and organizations)
- 4. Creation, expansion, and interaction of economic systems.** (agricultural and pastoral production; trade and commerce; labor systems; industrialization; capitalism and socialism)
- 5. Development and transformation of social structures.** (gender roles and relations; family and kinship; racial and ethnic constructions; social and economic classes)

### *This Booklet's Main Themes:*

- 1** Interaction between humans and the environment.
- 2** Development and interaction of cultures.

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# Teacher Introduction

## ★ Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it’s because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,  
conflicting  
perspectives are  
among the truths  
of history.  
No single  
objective or  
universal account  
could ever put an  
end to this endless  
creative dialogue  
within and  
between the past  
and the present.”*

From the 2011 Statement on Standards  
of Professional Conduct of the Council of  
the American Historical Association.

## ★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

### **Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes**

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. *Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way.* (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **One DBQ.** On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

## ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

### **1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.**

Give them copies of pages 5–7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

### **2. Have students do the worksheets.**

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

NOTE: If you are using these materials with an AP world history class, an honors class, or some other group of advanced and/or more knowledgeable students, you may want to make more written sources available to them on this topic. Do a basic Internet search for sources that provide additional perspectives and then add to the sources provided here.

### **3. “Debate the documents” as a class.**

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source’s point of view.

### **4. Have students do the final DBQ.**

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

**The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):**

“When Europeans arrived in the Americas, they only saw what they wanted to see, and they misunderstood the native peoples here entirely.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay’s thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

## ★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

### **Excellent Essay**

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

### **Good Essay**

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

### **Fair Essay**

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

### **Poor Essay**

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in “laundry list” style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.



# Suggestions to the Student

## ★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

## ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

### 1. **Read the one-page introductory essay.**

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



### 2. **Study the primary source documents for this lesson.**

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

### 3. **Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.**

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

### 4. **As a class, debate the documents.**

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

### 5. **Do the final DBQ.**

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

## ***Two Worlds Collide***

Christopher Columbus made landfall in the Bahamas on October 12, 1492. After leaving Spain in August, he first stopped at the Canary Islands. Only on September 6 did he finally head into unknown waters. His voyage across the Atlantic did not actually take that long. Yet about five weeks later, on October 12, Columbus believed he had reached an island off East Asia. His quick crossing did not surprise him because he mistakenly thought the world was much smaller around than it actually is. His error was a part of his success. Had he realized how far Asia really was from Europe, he might not have tried to reach it by sailing west in the first place.

Such misunderstandings were to be a constant part of the age of exploration. Europe was only just emerging from its isolation at the western tip of the great Eurasian landmass. The Renaissance was helping Europeans recover much of the lost literary heritage of ancient Rome and Greece. Contact with other cultures was awakening European curiosity about the larger world and a desire to understand it better. Yet in many ways, Columbus and other explorers were products of medieval Christendom. They were largely ignorant of many faraway regions, and they felt hemmed in by powerful Muslim enemies on all sides.

To break out of this bind, Portugal had been sending ships slowly down the coast of Africa. Ultimately, the Portuguese reached the Indian Ocean that way, bypassing Muslim-controlled trading networks and gaining direct access to the fabulous spices and silks of East Asia. Columbus, of course, hoped to achieve the same goal for Spain by sailing west. In each case, a combination of greed, curiosity, and a crusading Christian spirit motivated them.

Their encounters with others along the way were of less importance to them. Moreover, their encounters with the peoples of the Americas were a complete surprise. Yet these encounters were to change them in ways they could hardly begin to imagine.

As Europeans explored, conquered, and colonized in the centuries after Columbus, they tried to make sense of the many cultures they found. They expected their deeply held Christian beliefs to guide them in this, and they expected the Christian story and message to be as attractive to other societies as it was to them. They soon discovered these other societies had their own systems of belief, arts and technologies, achievements and limitations. In seeing this, many of them reacted with contempt or indifference, while some were fascinated and even sympathetic. All of them had to struggle to fit these new experiences into their old ideas. In the process, Europeans would be changed by those they encountered even as those they encountered changed them.

And what of those others whom the Europeans encountered? It is much harder to say what they thought and felt at first. Few American native cultures had written records. And the Spanish conquerors often destroyed those records that did exist. Yet some voices have been partially preserved. For this lesson, you will study a variety of European responses to the peoples of the Americas. You will also study one fascinating record of an Aztec's first encounter with the Spaniards.

All the sources deal with the earliest Spanish contact with the Americas. However, they can offer insight into the general process that would repeat itself many times in the Americas and elsewhere in the centuries after 1492.

Historians writing about Europe's encounter with the Americas have often written about the exchange of plants, diseases, domestic animals, tools, and products. The impact of the encounter on ideas and attitudes is much harder to grasp. The sources here may give you some help as you do try to grasp this.

# Two Worlds Collide Time Line

1492

• • •

Christopher Columbus lands in the Bahamas and returns to Spain with news of the lands he has discovered and his impressions of the natives he encounters.

1510

• • •

At a church in Santo Domingo, Dominican friar Anton Montecino preaches his sermon critical of Spanish treatment of the natives. Many Spanish colonial leaders are in attendance.

1513

• • •

After several years as a colonist with his own *encomienda*, or estate, Bartolome de Las Casas becomes a priest. The next year, 1514, he begins to speak out against Spanish oppression of the Indians. He is famous and widely admired, though some are critical and view his accounts as exaggerated.

1519–1521

• • •

Hernan Cortes and 600 soldiers arrive in Mexico. A native woman, Malinche, becomes his guide and interpreter. He is allowed to enter the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, where some Aztecs see him as Quetzalcoatl, a mythic light-skinned god-king whose return from the east was expected. Cortes forces the Aztec ruler Moctezuma to swear allegiance to King Charles of Spain. Later, fighting breaks out, and Cortes and his men are forced to flee Tenochtitlan. Cortes returns with native enemies of the Aztecs as allies. As plague strikes the Aztecs, Cortes takes control of Tenochtitlan and destroys the Aztec empire.

1528–1536

• • •

Alvar Cabeza de Vaca and three other survivors of an original group of 300 explore what will become the U.S. Southwest. For a time, they are enslaved and live among tribes of this region. De Vaca gains fame as a healer before he and the others finally make their way back to Spanish-held Mexico.

1547–1585

• • •

Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagun compiles the *Codex Florentino*. He supervises a group of native Indians who record other native eyewitness accounts of the Spanish conquest in Nahuatl, the language the Aztecs used. Later, Sahagun further revises the *Codex* and translates it into Spanish.

1531–1533

• • •

After several earlier tries, conquistador Francisco Pizarro and 180 soldiers find Peru and conquer the Inca Empire, after ambushing and then later executing its last emperor.

1607

• • •

English settlers found Jamestown in Virginia. Starvation and disease kill more than half the original colonists. Wahunsenacawh, or Chief Powhatan of the Powhatan Confederacy, captures Captain John Smith. The chief's daughter Pocahontas may have saved Smith from execution. Pocahontas later marries colonist John Rolfe, is baptized, assumes the name Rebecca Rolfe, visits England with her husband and other members of the Powhatan Confederacy, and dies just as she is about to leave in 1617.

1608–1609

• • •

Samuel de Champlain founds Quebec in Canada for France. The next year he battles the Iroquois and uses guns against them for the first time.

1621

• • •

Pilgrims at Plymouth in New England sign a peace treaty with the Wampanoag Indians. They celebrate a day of thanksgiving and invite some of the Indians who helped them get through their first winter.

1622

• • •

Chief Powhatan's successor, Opechancanough, gives up diplomacy and attacks the Virginia colonists, seeking to drive them out. About 350 settlers are killed. The colonists retaliate, killing hundreds of the natives. Relations between natives and settlers never really recover after that.



## Visual Primary Source Documents 1 & 2

Document 1



The Granger Collection, New York

Document 2



The Granger Collection, New York

### Information on Documents 1 & 2

**Document 1.** Tenochtitlan (Mexico City) at the time of the Spanish Conquest. This colored woodcut is from the Latin edition of the second letter Hernan Cortes sent to Spain's King Charles V shortly after Cortes and his forces conquered the Aztecs (1519–1521). The illustration shows Tenochtitlan as an island in the middle of a lake. Four main stone causeways connect it to the mainland. Since the lake water was too salty, stone aqueducts carry water to the city.

**Document 2.** This Spanish color line engraving from 1737 is of Father Antonio Margil de Jesus (1657–1726). He was the Spanish founder of missions in what would become Texas. Father Margil is shown here preaching to Native Americans.



## Visual Primary Source Documents 3 & 4

Document 3



The Granger Collection, New York

Document 4



The Granger Collection, New York

### Information on Documents 3 & 4

**Document 3.** This drawing is by French explorer Samuel de Champlain. It was done around 1600, and is from his account *Voyage to the West Indies and Mexico*. It shows natives working in a silver mine. Some on the right are mining ore, as Spaniards supervise. One native, drawn in larger scale on the left, works a bellows to heat the ore and extract the silver from it.

**Document 4.** This drawing shows a Spanish conquistador beating a young Incan as his mother begs for mercy. It is from *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, published sometime between 1600 and 1615, by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala. Guaman Poma was a native Peruvian of a noble family. He learned Spanish early in life and used it to translate the native language Quechua for Spanish priests. Guaman Poma's *Chronicle* was a long critique of Spanish colonial rule, and he addressed it to King Philip III of Spain.



## Study the Documents: Visual Sources 1 & 2

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1 Main Idea—Doc. 1** \_\_\_\_\_

The city of Tenochtitlan impressed Hernan Cortez. In a brief paragraph, explain what might have impressed him most and why.

### **2 What Else Can You Infer?** \_\_\_\_\_

What does the source suggest or imply? Some historians would say that Visual Source Document 1 implies first that the Aztecs were a powerful and large empire, but secondly that they had enemies they feared. How are these things implied by this source?

### **3 Bias, or Point of View** \_\_\_\_\_

Visual Source Document 2 offers a very favorable view of Father Margil. How does it achieve this result? What point of view does it express regarding the Indians and their relationship to the Spanish missionaries?

## Study the Documents: Visual Sources 3 & 4

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1 Main Idea or Topic** \_\_\_\_\_

What overall impression of Spanish rule in the Americas do these two images suggest?

### **2 Visual Features** \_\_\_\_\_

Each image here shows a rather harsh side of Spanish rule. What visual features in each image help to stress that harsh view?

### **3 Bias, or Point of View** \_\_\_\_\_

One image here is by a French explorer who himself set up a colony and fought Indians, but for France. The other is by a critic of Spanish rule. How do their illustrations express the points of view they might be expected to have?

## Comparing the Documents

★ *The Visual Sources*

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the Comparison Essay worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

**Which of these primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand Europe's earliest encounters with the Americas?**

*Document 1*



The Granger Collection, New York

## Document 2



The Granger Collection, New York

### Document 3



The Granger Collection, New York

*Document 4*



The Granger Collection, New York

Documents 1 & 2

Documents 3 &amp; 4

# Comparison Essay

*I chose Documents \_\_\_\_\_ because:*

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*I did **not** choose Documents \_\_\_\_\_.*

*However, a historian still might use the documents in the following way:*

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**Keep this in mind:** Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.

## Written Primary Source Document 1

### Information on Document 1

In 1519, Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortez landed on the coast of Mexico. When the Aztec ruler Moctezuma learned of this, he sent messengers to find out more about these strangers. Below is part of the report the messengers supposedly gave him. This report is in the Spanish *Codex Florentino*, which was compiled several decades later by native Indian translators under the supervision of Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagun. It claims to record what other native eyewitness to the events could recall. This report is reproduced in Miguel Leon-Portilla's *The Broken Spears* (Beacon Press, 1992).

### Document 1

*He was also terrified to learn how the cannon roared, how its noise resounded, how it caused one to faint and grow deaf. The messengers told him: "A thing like a ball of stone comes out of its entrails: it comes out shooting sparks and raining fire. The smoke that comes out with it has a pestilent odor, like that of rotten mud. This odor penetrates even to the brain, and causes the greatest discomfort. If the cannon is aimed against a mountain, the mountain splits and cracks open. If it is aimed against a tree, it shatters the tree into splinters. This is a most unnatural sight, as if the tree had exploded from within."*

*The messengers also said: "Their trappings and arms are all made of iron. They dress in iron and wear iron casques on their heads. Their swords are iron. Their deer carry them on their backs wherever they go. These deer, our lord, are as tall as the roof of a house.*

*"The strangers' bodies are completely covered, so that only their faces can be seen. Their skin is white, as if it were*

*made of lime. They have yellow hair, though some of them have black. Their beards are long and yellow, and their moustaches are also yellow. Their hair is curly, with very fine strands.*

*"As for their food, it is like human food. It is large and white, and not heavy. It is something like straw, but with the taste of cornstalk, of the pith of a cornstalk. It is a little sweet, as if it were flavored with honey; it tastes of honey, it is sweet-tasting food.*

*"Their dogs are enormous, with flat ears and long, dangling tongues. The color of their eyes is a burning yellow; their eyes flash fire and shoot off sparks. Their bellies are hollow, their flanks long and narrow. They are tireless and very powerful. They bound here and there, panting, with their tongues hanging out, and they are spotted like an ocelot."*

*When Motecuhzoma [Moctezuma] heard this report, he was filled with terror. It was as if his heart had fainted, as if it had shriveled. It was as if he were conquered by despair.*



## Written Primary Source Documents 2–4

### Information on Documents 2–4

**Document 2** is part of a description by Christopher Columbus of the natives he encountered upon first landing on the island of Hispaniola in 1492. The description is in his letter to Raphael Sanchez, Treasurer to the King and Queen of Spain.

**Document 3** is from a sermon Dominican friar Anton Montecino preached in Santo Domingo, for which many Spanish colonial leaders were present.

**Document 4.** Hernan Cortez was a nobleman who sought his fortune in the Americas and who acted against orders of Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar, the Spanish governor in Cuba, in his conquest of the Aztecs. The letters he wrote Spain's ruler, Emperor Charles V, were partly an attempt to justify his actions. This passage on Aztec society is from his second letter, in *The Dispatches of Hernando Cortés, the Conqueror of Mexico, addressed to the emperor Charles V, written during the conquest, and containing a narrative of its events* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1843).

### Document 2

*None of them are possessed of any iron, neither have they any weapons, being unacquainted with, and indeed incompetent to use them . . . As soon however as they see that they are safe, and have laid aside all fear, they are very simple and honest, and exceedingly liberal with all they have; none of them refusing any thing he may possess when he is asked for it.*

### Document 4

*In all the markets and public places of this city are seen daily many laborers waiting for some one to hire them. The inhabitants of this city pay a greater regard to style in their mode of dress and politeness of manners than those of the other provinces and cities; since, as the Cacique Moctezuma has his residence in the capital, and all the nobility, his vassals, are in constant habit of meeting there, a general courtesy of demeanor necessarily prevails. But not to be prolix in describing what relates to the affairs of this great city, although it is with difficulty I refrain from proceeding, I will say no more than that the manners of the people, as shown in their intercourse with one another, are marked by as great an attention to the proprieties of life as in Spain, and good order is equally well observed; and considering that they are barbarous people, without the knowledge of God, having no intercourse with civilized nations, these traits of character are worthy of admiration.*

### Document 3

*You are in mortal sin and you are heading for damnation . . . For you are destroying an innocent people. They are God's people, these innocents, whom you destroyed. By what right do you make them die? Mining gold for you in your mines or working for you in your fields, by what right do you unleash enslaving wars upon them? They lived in peace in this land before you came, in peace in their own homes. They did nothing to harm you to cause you to slaughter them wholesale.*

## Study the Document: Written Source 1

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1 Main Idea or Topic** \_\_\_\_\_

What overall impression of the strangers  
did the Aztec messengers want  
Moctezuma to have?

### **2 Interpreting Meanings** \_\_\_\_\_

List the things these messengers had  
trouble understanding. Also list the terms  
they used to help them connect these new  
items to things they did know about and  
understand.

### **3 Evaluating Sources** \_\_\_\_\_

This account was recorded by native  
interviewers, under the supervision of a  
Spanish missionary, many years after the  
events described. How dependable do  
you think it is? Why?

## **Study the Documents: Written Sources 2-4**

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1 Bias, or Point of View**

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Compare Columbus's views with those of Anton Montecino. In what ways are they alike and not alike? Do you think seeing the native peoples as "simple and honest," or as "innocent," showed real respect for them? Why or why not?

### **2 Evaluating Sources**

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Columbus later took part in warfare against some native Indian tribes and enslaved others. Does this show that his admiration for the natives he first met was dishonest or hypocritical? Why or why not?

### **3 Interpreting Meanings**

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Cortez praises the Aztecs' care for the "proprieties of life." He is perplexed about this, given that the Aztecs are "barbarous" and not in touch with any "civilized" society. Explain what you think he means by these various terms.

### **4 Compare & Contrast**

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Of all these written sources, which one shows the clearest understanding of the people being encountered for the first time?

# Comparing the Documents

## ★ *The Written Sources*

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the Comparison Essay worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

**Which of these primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand Europe's earliest encounters with the Americas?**

*Part of a report  
Aztec messengers  
supposedly gave  
Moctezuma on their first  
encounter with  
Hernan Cortes and  
his soldiers*

*Document 1*

☐

*Descriptions of native  
people and cultures by  
Christopher Columbus  
and Cortes, and a  
critical comment about  
the Spanish  
by Anton Montecino*

*Documents 2–4*

☐



## Comparison Essay

*I chose Documents \_\_\_\_\_ because:*

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*I did **not** choose Documents \_\_\_\_\_.*

*However, a historian still might use the documents in the following way:*

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**Keep this in mind:** Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.

# Document-Based Question

Your task is to answer a document-based question (DBQ) on the earliest encounters between Europe and the Americas. In a DBQ, you use your analysis of primary source documents and your knowledge of history to write a brief essay answering the question. Using all four sets of documents, answer this question. Below are two DBQs. The first is somewhat less demanding than the second. Use whichever DBQ your teacher assigns.

## Document-Based Question

1

**“When Europeans arrived in the Americas, they only saw what they wanted to see, and they misunderstood the native peoples here entirely.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?**

OR

2

**“Europeans arrived in the New World set to conquer and enslave. They had no interest in the native peoples here, and that’s why they never learned to live with them in peace.” Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement.**

Below is a checklist of key suggestions for writing a DBQ essay. Next to each item, jot down a few notes to guide you in writing the DBQ. Use extra sheets to write a four- or five-paragraph essay.

- *Introductory Paragraph*  
Does the paragraph clarify the DBQ itself? Does it present a clear thesis, or overall answer, to that DBQ?
- *The Internal Paragraphs—1*  
Are these paragraphs organized around main points with details supporting those main ideas? Do all these main ideas support the thesis in the introductory paragraph?
- *The Internal Paragraphs—2*  
Are all of your main ideas and key points linked in a logical way? That is, does each idea follow clearly from those that went before? Does it add something new and helpful in clarifying your thesis?
- *Use of Primary Source Documents*  
Are they simply mentioned in a “laundry list” fashion? Or are they used thoughtfully to support main ideas and the thesis?
- *Concluding Paragraph*  
Does it restate the DBQ and thesis in a way that sums up the main ideas without repeating old information or going into new details?

# Worksheet Answers and Guidelines

Some worksheet questions call for specific answers to factual questions. In these cases, correct answers are provided here. Most worksheet questions are open-ended and call on students to offer their own interpretations and personal reactions. In those cases, we offer suggestions based on the purpose of the question and the sort of interpretive activity it calls for.

## Worksheet 1

### *Visual Sources 1 & 2*

1. Perhaps the size, the organized nature of the city, the stone causeways and other structures, etc.
2. They would probably have to control large amounts of land to feed this city's population; they would have to be able to organize many workers to build the city, etc. Its protected nature on an island suggests fears of attack.
3. The natives appear to adore him; they seem glad to hear his teachings and trust him, etc.

## Worksheet 2

### *Visual Sources 3 & 4*

1. Answers may vary, but should stress the harsh (and at times violent) nature of Spanish rule, its focus on using forced native labor to extract gold and silver and other resources, etc.
2. The rather stark landscape in Visual Source Document 3, the tiny naked figures of Indian workers, the Spaniards standing around supervising, etc. In Visual Source Document 4, the weapons and indifferent expressions of the Spaniards, the weeping Indians, etc.
3. Answers will vary, especially in interpreting Champlain's drawing. Discuss responses in class.

## Worksheet 3

### *Written Source 1*

1. They appear to have stressed the things that gave them military (or even magical) power that they found frightening or threatening.
2. Cannons and specifically how they seemed to work, horses, armor, and their strange and powerful dogs. They use familiar terms from nature ("entrails," "deer," etc.).
3. Answers may vary. Discuss these in class.

## Worksheet 4

### *Written Sources 2-4*

1. Some may see these views as respectful, others as romantic but condescending.
2. Answers may vary. Discuss in class.
3. Answers may vary. Use the class discussion to analyze the terms.
4. Answers will vary. Discuss in class.



# **Visual Primary Sources**





## First Group—Documents 1 & 2

Document 1



The Granger Collection, New York

Document 2



The Granger Collection, New York



## First Group—Documents 3 & 4

**Document 3**



The Granger Collection, New York

**Document 4**



The Granger Collection, New York



