

# Columbus: the other story

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Christopher Columbus is known as a hero, fearlessly sailing the seas and discovering new lands. He is so glorified that there is even a holiday named after him. However, Columbus is not the hero that he is thought out to be. Columbus had a lust for wealth and power and was willing to go to any extent to get it, such as enslaving the Indians there and taking over their islands.

Also, he wanted gold so he took lives of thousands. Christopher Columbus was extremely religious and racist that he devalued life of other religions as shown when he enslaved the Indians during his voyages. Therefore, when Columbus and his crew brutally enslaved and murdered the Arawak Tribe in the 1490's, he proved to be more of a tyrant than a hero due to the influence of European culture and his greed for wealth, gold, and religious extremism kkkkkkkj Columbus was responsible of the genocide that occurred in the islands, and just like in any genocide the leader was hungry for power. He had an unlimited desire for power due to the influence of imperialistic European culture. War and violence was common in the 1400's which heavily impacted European societies. For example, the Spanish war with the Moors had taken place Renaissance scholar J.

R Hale said, " An age brutalized by a habitual exposure to and. In difference towards cruelty. Animal combats were common princely entertainments. Criminals we mutilated and butchered in public to large and excited audiences and their bodies, or fragments of them, hung on gibbets outside town-walls or at crossroads. At times torture was carried out in public'"(Meltzer 32). J.

R Hale mainly said that there was a lot of violence and people actually enjoyed it. Also, people found entertainment in watching the slaughtering of animals during combat. Criminals were brutally killed and separated to pieces which hung around towns like a prize. Armies constantly came to and from battle bandits attacked villages and people until they paid a ransom, and people were killed frequently over little things such as gossip or rivalries. Milton Meltzer stated, “ Children were not protected from seeing such disasters.

Parents dressed their children like themselves and moved them speedily into adult occupations” (Meltzer 40). What Milton Meltzer is saying is that people were selfish and used their children for their own purposes neglecting their needs. When Columbus was eight he saw men with swords chase each other; seeing violence at such a young age must have heavily impacted him. Furthermore, most Europeans were illiterate and men were enrolled in schooling until the age of fourteen to join their fathers for work; they were uneducated which made them think irrationally. Also, there is no evidence of Columbus having a formal education.

All in all, the imperialistic European culture of war greatly influenced Columbus’s genocide. Many events through Columbus’s life proved that his personality too was always craving power. For example, he demanded for enormous rewards if his plan succeeded. Which is ten percent of all the goods and riches he and his crew members find, and the title of admiral and governor which gave him total control of all the Atlantic and the lands he finds. Also, another example is when Rodrigo de Triana , a sailor that sailed

on the Pinta on October 12, 1492, called out land for he had seen the cliffs in the moonlight.

Rodrigo was supposed to be rewarded 10, 000 maravedis, which is enough money for a life time. However, when Columbus found out that Rodrigo found land he claimed that the other day he had seen a light and took the reward for himself. Observably, Columbus most likely did this for power and/or for the compensation because seeing a light is not provable evidence of seeing land whereas Rodrigo did because he actually saw cliffs which is more credible. Generally, Columbus's actions prove that he was power-hungry. Columbus and his crew of ninety men departed on August 3, 1492.

Ten days later he landed on the Canary Islands, which was the only Spanish colony in Europe. From there he moved west of the Atlantic leading him towards the Americas. On October 12, 1492 the crew discovered land and arrived in the New World. According to the National Geographic magazine Columbus had landed on one of the Bahamas Islands named Samana (Meltzer 84) . There he saw naked and dark-skinned people called the Arawak “ a friendly local population that Columbus called Indians”(Phillips). While the Arawaks celebrates Columbus's arrival gifting him with red caps and glass beads, Columbus discovered and claimed their land for Spain.

However, “ They had been there thousands of years before the white man would discover them, enslave them, and exterminate them”(Meltzer 86). When Columbus first saw them he was shocked by their timid nature and diverse appearance. As he puts in his journal: “ They all go as naked as their mothers bore them, and the women also. Some of them paint their faces,

some their whole bodies, some only the nose. They not bear arms or know them, for I showed to them swords and they took them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance.

These people are very unskilled in arms. With fifty men they could all be subjected and made to do all that I wish”(Meltzer 91). In return of their gifts and generous nature the very first thing that came to Columbus’s mind was that they do not have weapons and that they could be controlled to his desires. Furthermore, Columbus was surprised by their gentle nature. He wrote :” Anything they have, if it be asked for they never say no, but rather invite the person to accept it, and show as much lovingness as though they would give their hearts.

” (Meltzer 91). He also noted the difference of their lifestyle when compared to Europe. He also wrote ” Nor have I ever been able to learn whether they held personal property, for it seemed to me that whatever one had, they all took shares of.”(Meltzer 91) Noticeably, Columbus stilled looked at everything from a European point of view, as if every culture had to be the same as his. Overall, European culture impacted Columbus’s decisions and actions.

Furthermore, Columbus treated the natives as if they were his property . For example he captured five young men to train them as interpreters along with seven other women to cause further riot. When he reached Haiti he claimed it and called it Hispaniola. There he captured a woman to use as a decoy. Columbus captured and let her free so she could tell the others about him; he wanted other islanders to trust him because he let the woman go.

Columbus came up with a plan to overrun the islands and take control of the people. During his second voyage, Columbus had a fever. His crew took advantage of his collapse and robbed the Arawaks. Columbus did not know what they did, but when he found out instead of stopping them he came up with the plan to use them as manual labor. His crew rounded 1500 Arawaks and held them in pens like animals. Columbus only took 500 of them because he only had that much room in his ship.

Moreover, he left the others for his crew members to keep as slaves. One Colonist wrote " They rushed in all directions like lunatics, women dropping and abandoning infants in the panic, running for miles without stopping, fleeing across mountains and rivers." (Meltzer 141) There was pandemonium and bloodshed everywhere for they were unaware of what was going on. Mothers left their innocent babies to die, and were not sure if they were going to die or not also. Columbus built three forts in the island in which he used to control Indians and forced them to pay in gold for their lives. Anyone fourteen or up had to collect gold every three months.

Each person who got the required amount of gold was given a copper token which allowed them to live for three more months. Unfortunately, gold was scarce; There was only gold dust found in the islands ocean and their gold ornaments which takes years to make. Nevertheless, there was barely any gold resulting in more dead Arawaks'. Although, there were some Arawaks' that had escaped, the majority were hunted down by the Spaniards . In the 1490's Columbus was surprised by the Arawaks' timid nature; they gifted him , helped him and guided him, but two years later their race was dying.

In the two years that had passed 250, 000 Arawaks were dead. They were overworked until they either committed suicide or were murdered. As a result, there is not a single person today who is of complete Arawak descent. A whole culture, way of life, and race was exterminated by the Spaniards who were under the leadership of Columbus of this genocide. He was highly motivated by his greed for gold as stated on his letters to Ferdinand and Isabela ( rulers of Spain): “ Gold is most excellent; gold is treasure, and he who possesses it does all he wishes to in this world.”(Rabbit) Furthermore, he was willing to go to the extent to kill to satisfy his greed for gold.

Columbus enslaved, killed, and treated human life as animals because of his never-ending desire for gold. He overlooked the fact that there was barely any gold in the islands. Although Columbus was greedy for gold, another factor that caused him to kill is his racism and religious extremism. He wrote , once again, in his journal: “ I believe they could easily be made Christians for they appeared to have no idols. God willing, when I make my departure I will bring half a dozen back to their majesties.... Should Your Majesties command it, all the inhabitants could be taken away to Castile, or made slaves in the island.

” (Meltzer 93). Just because they were not Christians, Columbus thought it was okay to enslave them because he thought of them as property rather than as human beings. In addition, since he was European, he thought of other races as inferior. Columbus is considered a hero and a role model, but is a hero someone who is responsible for the death of nine million individuals? He exterminated a whole culture. Therefore, when Columbus enslaved and wiped out the Arawak tribe he proved to be a oppressor due to <https://assignbuster.com/columbus-the-other-story/>

the influences of European culture : greed for power, gold, and religious-extremism. Columbus was influenced by the violent European lifestyle.

Also, he had a greed for power when he became admiral of the ocean and took control of the islands. In addition, Christopher Columbus was highly motivated to kill because he wanted gold. Moreover, Columbus was also racist and devalued life of other races. The hero that Columbus is shown to be in media is completely opposite of the man he was.