

Opposing views on columbus' character



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It is quite clear that Columbus is a controversial figure in American history; many different views of the "Admiral of the Ocean" are presented to the American public. For starters Columbus Day is still viewed as a national holiday; on the other side many people are strongly rooted against celebrating the landing of Columbus on the Americas. Some people argue that there is no point to the holiday because Columbus did not even land in North America; others say that he is a crucial part of American History, and of course some say he did more harm than good.

Academics have many varying views on the explorer as well; for example Zinn and Morrison, both men wrote on almost exactly the same topic and the end results were two completely different views. Both Zinn and Morrison's views on Columbus are much more different than similar resulting in two very different articles. Each author depicts Columbus as a different figure entirely. Howard Zinn seems to portray Columbus as a power hungry, moneyseeking, and arrogant war monger: "The first man to sight land [For money]... Rodrigo never got it.

Columbus Claimed he had seen a light the evening before. He got the reward (Zinn). " (Morrison does not acknowledge this) The reader can clearly feel a strong sense of anger from the author towards Columbus, for one thing this particular sentence was not crucial to the essay whatsoever, therefore the lack of necessity and the bluntness of the statement reveals a strong bias. This was only one example of how Zinn portrays Columbus as the next worse thing to the plague, he continues on by explaining, in immense detail, various unnecessary acts of violence by Columbus.

Morrison on the other side of the spectrum presents Columbus more neutrally, writing on both Columbus' good deeds and negative also. Morrison also delves into Columbus' background to explain some of his shortcomings such as greed and the need for attention. However Morrison almost defends and sympathizes with Columbus at points by saying Columbus was "forced" into the position in which he had to act immoral. In comparison, though, Morrison takes a more neutral stand point on Columbus' character than Zinn.

Of course both authors share something in their writing and that is bias, however Zinn's sense of bias is much stronger than that of Morrison's. Zinn's bias primarily focuses on his view of Columbus' treatment of the Natives and Columbus' character, which greatly influences Zinn's article. It is clear from the beginning that Zinn wishes to write primarily about the Indians and how they were treated by the way his first paragraph is centered on the Indians and how Columbus planned to treat them.

Every chance Zinn was able to write in violence he chose to; five different instances of violence can be read in his article. Finally Mr. Zinn states that Columbus' second much larger voyage was only due to his "exaggerated report and promises (Zinn)." This statement is supplied with no evidence whatsoever and any somewhat read person could plainly see this as an opinion. Morrison on the other hand almost seems to take the side of Columbus, perhaps to counter all the negativity towards the infamous explorer.

Bashing Columbus was simply not the goal of Morrison; instead he takes a more analytical approach by acknowledging both good and bad qualities to the trip and chooses to focus on the journey as a whole and how it began

to evolve. To contrast the two writers, three events were mentioned in both articles but all three were totally represented differently. The first being when Columbus takes a few Arawaks to guide him to the gold, Morrison simply states that he picked "up a few Indians as guides," while of course Zinn decides to say Columbus took "some of them [Indians] as prisoners. Of course as a reader it is difficult to discern which is more accurate. Both authors explain the destruction of fort Navidad, however very differently, Morrison is straight forward saying the sailors got into a quarrel with the Indians because of their search for girls and gold; at the same time Zinn goes into explicit details that the sailors were attempting to rape and plunder. The last incident is Columbus' request of gold tributes from the natives, both explain that the tribute was impossible but Zinn goes into grotesque detail regarding the punishment of the slaves furthering how biased he really is.

The angry passion Zinn writes with is something that could make it hard for the audience to believe. Instead of using a strong argument and direct evidence Mr. Zinn chooses to write angrily on his topic and is extremely blatant in doing so, because of this his account of the entire journey is much harder to believe than that of Morrison's. Simultaneously Zinn's style of writing versus Morrison's makes both articles, although pertaining to the same thing, extremely different.