

## Columbus Lands in the Americas

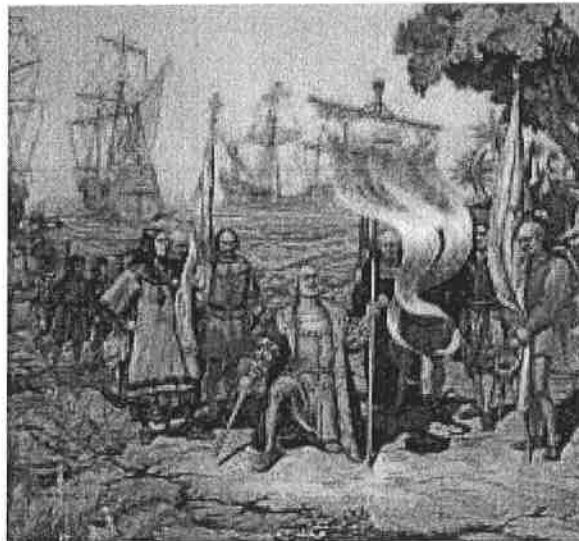
ON RETURNING FROM HIS VOYAGE TO THE Americas, Christopher Columbus wrote a



letter describing his experience. In this passage from the letter, he tells of his arrival on the island of Hispaniola.

“The people of this island and of all the other islands which I have found and of which I have information, all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them. They have no iron or steel or weapons, nor are they fitted to use them. This is not because they are not well built and of handsome stature, but because they are very marvelously timid. They have no other arms than spears made of canes, cut in seeding time, to the end of which they fix a small sharpened stick.

They refuse nothing that they possess, if it be asked of them; on the contrary, they invite any one to share it and display as much love as if they would give their hearts. They are content with whatever trifle of whatever kind they may be given to them, whether it be of value or valueless. I forbade that they should be given things so worthless as fragments of broken crockery, scraps of broken glass and lace tips, although when they were able to get them, they fancied that they possessed the best jewel in the world. So it was found that for a leather strap a soldier received gold to the weight of two and half castellanos, and others received much more for other things which were worthless. . . . I gave them a thousand handsome good things, which I had brought, in order that they might conceive affection for us and, more than that, might become Christians and be inclined to the love and service of Your Highnesses [king and queen of Spain], and strive to collect and give us of the things which they have in abundance and what are necessary to us.



*Columbus landing in the Americas*

They practice no kind of idolatry, but have a firm belief that all strength and power, and indeed all good things, are in heaven, and that I had descended from thence with these ships and sailors, and under this impression was I received after they had thrown aside their fears. Nor are they slow or stupid, but of very clear understanding; and those men who have crossed to the neighbouring islands give an abominable description of everything they observed; but they never saw any people clothed, nor any ships like ours.”

—Christopher Columbus, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*

### Analyzing Primary Sources

1. Why did Columbus give the peoples of Hispaniola “a thousand handsome good things”?
2. How did the explorers take advantage of Native Americans?

