

Four Voyages to the New World; Letters and Selected Documents Study Guide

Four Voyages to the New World; Letters and Selected Documents by Christopher Columbus

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Plot Summary

Four Voyages to the New World; Letters and Selected Documents by Christopher Columbus is the account of Christopher Columbus's four journeys to North America between 1492 and 1504. The voyages are presented through a variety of primary sources: these include Columbus's own log-book of his travels and letters to the sovereigns of Spain, as well as to various other correspondents; excerpts from Columbus's son's biography of his father, which includes detailed descriptions of the journeys (some of which the son, Hernando Colon, went on as well); and accounts from various other sources, including a doctor who accompanied Columbus on his voyages and a sailor who served under Columbus's ("The Admiral") command. The book includes an introduction from the editor and translator, J.M. Cohen, who supports and refutes various claims made throughout the book; in addition, maps of each voyage and the overall journeys are included in each section.

Columbus, who thought he was discovering the east Indies, famously set off for his first voyage to North America or the New World in 1492. During this trip, he visited many settlements and villages in what are now Jamaica, Hispaniola, and Cuba. This trip took several months; in his log-book, Columbus describes the voyage across the Atlantic and the physical characteristics of the new territories and their inhabitants in great detail. The second trip, which included stops along the Leeward Islands as well as travel around Puerto Rico and a return to Hispaniola, also went well, though Columbus was dismayed not to find as much gold as he had hoped for, in addition to which most of the men he had left there during his first voyage had been killed. During Columbus's third voyage, his men had become greatly disheartened and mutinied against him, leaving him with only a few followers. Hearing of this, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel in Spain sent an independent judge to see if Columbus was really an unjust leader; however, this judge took control of Columbus's property without making any inquiries and sent the explorer back to Castile in chains. Finally, however, Columbus was vindicated and returned for one last trip; on his return journey to Spain, the queen died, and he arrived only to die shortly thereafter himself.

Throughout the accounts, Columbus tells of how his conception of the world changed. For example, while he originally accepted the fact that the earth was round, his navigation convinced him that it was, in fact, pear-shaped and smaller than he had initially thought.



Introduction and First Voyage: 1492-3

Introduction and First Voyage: 1492-3 Summary and Analysis

Four Voyages to the New World, or just The Four Voyages (as later editions are called), traces the four major voyages of explorer Christopher Columbus to the "New World," or North America, through original fifteenth- and sixteenth-century documents. In his introduction, editor and translator J.M. Cohen sets forth the documents he has chosen to include in this volume. He remarks that the historian Oviedo, whose writings are included, had some facts wrong (including the idea that the New World had already been discovered by earlier Spanish kings). In addition, Cohen presents a vision of Columbus as a skilled yet flawed man who did not have good leadership skills and desperately needed a quick success to prove to the king and queen of Spain that his voyages were successes.

Documents from the first voyage include a history by Captain Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo, Columbus's own log-book, excerpts from a biography written by Columbus's son, and letters from Columbus to various people about his first voyage.

Oviedo, a royal historian, gives a brief biographical description of Christopher Columbus as an explorer, writing that his origins were humble and tracing his voyages. He writes that other Spanish kings of antiquity had discovered these islands before (though, as Cohen writes, this is categorically untrue). He also recounts how Columbus had asked many other kings for help before approaching King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel of Spain.

Columbus's own log-book gives an extremely detailed account of his journey. In this section, he writes about how he and his men covered many leagues, though they were uncertain about the rudder of the Pinta (one of the famous ships with which they made their voyage). Columbus describes the sights of the ocean, including seaweed and what looks to him like fire falling from the sky during the night. Finally, he and his men decide that they are near land, as they note the stars changing position and see birds and even whales. Columbus, also known as "The Admiral", had told his men that the trip would be longer than it was, so that they would not think it was too long and become impatient on the voyage. Though his men had already begun to complain, Columbus told them that they had to reach the Indies (their original destination). Finally, a look-out named Rodrigo sighted land, but when he claimed the reward Columbus had promised, the Admiral told him that he had actually seen it first. Debarking from their ships, the men landed on the Bahamas and claimed it for the sovereigns, shocked by the naked, painted men who had no metal. They exchanged presents and, though Columbus thought of taking them for servants, he did not. The colonizers gave small tokens to the natives, looking for gold and precious metals for themselves. The natives found their ships terrifying, and Columbus worked hard to be kind to them so that they would speak well of the Spanish. In his log-book, he notes the trees, wildlife, and geography of the



area, as well as their "lack" of religion and of land animals except for small dogs and snakes. The men went on to explore Cuba, searching (in vain) for the spices of the Orient.

Columbus's son Hernando added to this description of his father's in his own biography. When they found land, he writes, the sailors scared the natives and debarked slowly. Eventually, they had to caulk their ship. They were greeted as gods by the Indians, who spoke highly of them and served them sweet potatoes, corn, and gave them tobacco. The Europeans were shocked by the food, which included worms and other non-traditional food. Later, Columbus continued his journey and found beautiful coasts, inhabited by natives with nose plates who told him that gold was further off. However, the Europeans exchanged trinkets with the chief; when leaving, they ran over a reef, but the natives helped them with their boat. Columbus wanted to continue to another island; they then ran into fierce natives, with whom they had a small battle. On the way back to Castile, they saw quite a bit more seaweed and encountered a huge storm, which worried Columbus that nobody would ever know of his voyage; therefore, he sealed a letter in a bottle and set it out to sea. Later, they landed in the Azores and visited the Portuguese there who were at first hostile but later accommodating. Finally, the Spanish ships set sail for home again.

In his letters to others about the voyage, Columbus traced his trip from the Canary Islands to the "Indes," describing his visit to Cuba. There, he saw small houses, and a fertile island; he also visited Hispaniola, where he found the natives to be timid but generous; he aimed to convert them all to Catholicism. In Villa de Navidad, he met the king and made friends with him, finding gold on another island. Columbus wrote that he needed more assistance for another voyage to return and capture slaves from among the idolaters.



Second Voyage: 1493-6

Second Voyage: 1493-6 Summary and Analysis

The documents of Columbus's second voyage include sections from his son's biography of his father, as well as a letter written by a doctor (Dr. Chanca) who accompanied Columbus on this trip.

The first section from Hernando Colon's biography describes Columbus's attempts to settle Hispaniola, which the Pope had confirmed could rightfully belong to the Spanish (in fact, he extended this right as far as the Orient). In addition, Columbus wished to retrieve the men they had left there on the first voyage; the sovereigns had affirmed his right to do so.

The second section, written by Doctor Chanca, describes the voyage from September 25th until November 3rd, when the men spotted land. There, after debarking at the harbor, they found more islands with plenty of natural beauty, parrots, and cotton. However, they also found the remains of human bones, leading them to suspect that they had come upon the Carib tribe, who were known as cannibals. Later, some sailors that had disappeared as prisoners of the Caribs came onto the boat, confirming that they were in the Caribs' territory. The Doctor describes how the Caribs, who bound their legs, raided other islands for beautiful girls (though they would only eat full-grown men). He also writes that the women in this part of the world were very welcoming. An editor's note adds another letter from a sailor who describes the process of basically raping a native woman. The explorers went on to new islands, where they visited Haiti and Bohio, impressed by the birds and the greenery. There, they inquired after the Christians they had left behind, to be told that some had died of disease and others had been killed in quarrels between themselves; however, later, the sailors learned that the men had caused much distress and been killed. They found the empty huts with Spanish clothes outside. The native chief expressed extreme displeasure at this, even crying himself.

The third section, which returns to Hernando Colon's book, notes that Columbus was ill for an extended period of time, accounting for a gap in his diary. In Ciabo, they had found a lot of gold, while Columbus's men planned a revolt; they had not planned to work so much to get rich. The natives, on the other hand, held all of their possessions in common; Colon remarks that the native food took a lot of getting used to. At the fort, they had found a fertile area and beautiful climate, though there were rumors of an Indian uprising as Columbus planned the town. He hoped to keep 300 men on the island. At the time, they did not know if Cuba was an island; the men traveled to Jamaica, fighting with the natives but then making peace, and eventually repairing their broken ship and going back to Cuba. On the way, they encountered a terrible storm and saw many small islets; they stopped briefly to take fish from native people, as their supplies were running low. Columbus was ill and suffered from insomnia; in addition, his men needed water. At this point, his log book stopped, as he was exhausted and most



likely experienced a nervous breakdown. On his return, his brother Bartolomé Colon had come and formed a council with Columbus. Colon then describes the habits of native people who worshiped three stones and had funerals where sometimes they would cut off and keep their loved one's heads. By the end of the voyage, men were starving because of the small rations and relieved to return to Spain.



Third Voyage: 1498-1500

Third Voyage: 1498-1500 Summary and Analysis

The five documents describing Columbus's third voyage include three further excerpts of his son's biography; the narrative Columbus dispatched to the Spanish sovereigns; and a letter from Columbus to the Governess of Don Juan of Castile.

The first excerpt from Hernando Colon's biography describes Columbus's return to Spain, where he received many presents and gave his accounts to the sovereigns. He wished to return, but could not until nearly a year later, when men went without him as Columbus waited for a larger fleet (which he finally received the following year).

Columbus's own chronicle details his voyage to what he was still convinced was Asia. His men were still upset that they had not become rich as they sailed around Cape Verde, which was extremely hot. As they sailed west, they discovered Trinidad, which had lighter-skinned natives than other islands the Europeans had seen. At Cape Verde, he remarked on the darker skin of the natives. At Cape Arenal, Columbus feared the ship would be swamped, but it was not. They arrived at Paria but could not stay; their rations were perishing quickly. Sleepless, Columbus had also recently experienced an inflammation of the eyes. Passing the equator, he became convinced that the irregular stars meant that the earth was not round but pear-shaped. He wrote to the sovereigns that he believed the "earthly Paradise" mentioned in the Bible was below the equator, but he did not believe that anybody could reach the top; he also mentions that he has told all of the natives about the king and queen and that he is worried they will cancel his voyages.

Columbus's son's second account of the third voyage describes how his father traveled to find six islands he called Las Guardias and three he called Los Testigos. By this time, Columbus was bleeding from the eyes as he found himself back near Hispaniola, though further West than he had thought they were. There, he found that many of his men had died and others had syphilis. Meanwhile, a group of men wanted to revolt, led by Francisco Roldan, who wanted to kill the Colon brothers and took as an excuse a ship that had been sitting in port for a long time. Columbus discovered their plot, and they then decided to try to capture the settlement of Concepción, but were also discovered. Columbus's crew went to to a settlement called Isabela; however, the men also wanted to go to see Jaragua, where the women were supposedly very welcoming; Roldan decided first to take Concepción. Columbus's captain inspired loyalty in his men; however, only six or seven stayed with him as Roldan enlisted the help of the Indians, dividing the Europeans. Columbus did not know how to punish the men, as he didn't want others to desert. His captain, Carvajal, tried to send men back to make an agreement with Roldan; however, Roldan refused, and Carvajal returned to his ship with few men and few provisions. Later, he spoke to the Admiral, who advocated moderation, promising the men food and a passage home - however, they still refused. The men sent a letter stating that they were leaving at the same time that Columbus sent a letter



stating his trust in them. Finally, the two sides reached an agreement that heavily favored the rebels. Still, more rebels attacked Columbus's men when he came to visit; later, Roldan stopped other men from attacking the Admiral, as he had recently been named mayor of the settlement. Columbus fought off other attacks, including one by Ojeda; men who had returned to Castile gave false reports to the sovereigns there, who sent their own judge. However, this judge took possession of all of Columbus's property while he was away and arrested him with no inquiry, sending him back to Spain in chains. Still, the judge's claims were so atrocious that the sovereigns refused to believe them; Columbus kept the chains his entire life.

Columbus's letter to the Governness of Don Juan of Castile describes his pitiful situation as he was initially badly received in Spain, describing the uprisings and his bad treatment by the new judge the sovereigns had sent. He had found the settlers dishonest and hoped that his reputation was not too much damaged. The explorer believed he was being judged as though he were governing an already settled area, which was not the case. He ends his letter with the complaint that the new "governor" had taken over his house and would not even cede his personal papers.

Columbus's son's final account of his father's third voyage describes Columbus's reception in Spain, where he was freed, welcomed, and told that the sovereigns would make restitution, along with their apologies.



Fourth Voyage: 1502-4

Fourth Voyage: 1502-4 Summary and Analysis

The documents describing Columbus's fourth voyage include a letter written by the Admiral to the Spanish sovereigns, the account of a sailor who traveled with Columbus, and a section from his son's biography.

Columbus's own letter describes a sixteen-day journey to "The Indies," where the men experienced storms more violent than they had ever seen, making them sick and stripping their ships. His thirteen-year-old son, Hernando, had accompanied him, and he worried for his other son, whom he had left in Spain. During this time, Columbus concluded that the world was smaller than previously thought. Finally, they landed in Vergaua, where some of the European men were killed by Indians; despite the gold fields there, the ships were in bad condition and Columbus moved on to Hispaniola and then Jamaica, where he asked for more ships. He describes the lands, people, animals, and mines, writing that he wants to deal fairly in gold with the natives, and asks the sovereigns for help.

Diego Mendez, a sailor, wrote an account of the storms as well, and also of seeing warriors in Vergaua; he tells the story of how he impressed hostile natives with a comb and mirror. Eventually, the Europeans "won" over the natives, then went to Jamaica, where the natives were gentle. Columbus spoke to Mendez of the danger they were facing, as their ship was almost completely worn down; he convinced Mendez and one other man to take six natives and go back for a larger ship to the other side of Hispaniola. It took five days, but Mendez accomplished it. Later, Mendez writes of how Columbus told the natives that if they were to obey him, the gods would make a sign that night; it happened to be the night of the eclipse, and the natives were impressed.

Finally, Columbus's son writes of how he returned to Hispaniola and eventually to Castile; though Queen Isabel had just died, the new King (Philip) had not yet arrived. Before he could arrive, however, Columbus himself died.



Characters

Christopher Columbus

Four Voyages to the New World shows the mythic figure of Christopher Columbus in a variety of lights, leading to a more complex view of his character. An Italian of humble origins, Columbus had asked many other European sovereigns for sponsorship before he found backing from the Spanish sovereigns. Though he was not much liked by his men, who revolted several times and mutinied on him more than once, he was a leader who worried extensively about the rations people would receive and the well-being of the natives of the lands he conquered (though only those he could convert to Christianity; the rest were 'infidels.'). A religious man, Columbus prayed during strenuous times and often thanked God though, as his letters were bound for the extremely religious Spanish sovereigns, it is unclear how much he actually believed in what he wrote. Queen Isabel clearly favored him; after her death, he feared that he would be ill-treated, though he died himself shortly thereafter of natural causes. His sons, who lived in Spain, appear only briefly in the book, though one (Hernando) wrote his father's biography and accompanied him on his last voyage, though he was only thirteen years old.

The Sovereigns

The sovereigns, as Columbus often refers to them, were King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel of Spain, who had sponsored the four voyages to the New World. As Catholics, the sovereigns cared less about the gain of material wealth and more about converting "heathens" to Christianity and spreading their religion around the globe. Columbus worried about losing their support and, indeed, almost did as rumors of his ill-treatment of his men and his withholding of wealth reached the King and Queen's ears. They sent a judge to decide whether or not Columbus had abused his authority; however, this judge claimed Columbus's property for his own and sent Columbus back to Spain in chains, where the sovereigns decided he had been in the right and been terribly ill-treated. They celebrated his achievements when he was back in Spain and sent him back to the New World one last time; Columbus himself died shortly after the Queen, before he had time to experience the King's judgment of him (which was reportedly less favorable than Queen Isabel's).

Hernando Colon

Columbus's son, who accompanied him on his last voyage and later wrote his father's biography, which is excerpted here. Note that "Colon" is from the Italian, whereas "Columbus" comes from the Latin version of the explorer's family name.



Dr Chanca

A physician who accompanied Columbus on his second voyage.

Diego Mendez

A sailor and crew member on Columbus's fourth and final voyage.

Carvajal

The captain of one of Columbus's ships, who tried to convince the mutineers to return.

Francisco Roldan

The leader of the mutiny against Columbus during his third voyage.

Francisco de Bobadilla

The judge who the sovereigns sent to see if Columbus had abused his powers.

Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo

The royal historian who wrote a brief biography of Columbus in his History of the Indies.

Bartolomé Colon

Columbus's brother who served as mayor of one of the New World settlements.



Objects/Places

Straits of Gibraltar

The place of departure for Columbus's first voyage.

Atlantic Ocean

The ocean Columbus and his men crossed four times going to what they thought were the "Indies" but which turned out to be North America.

India

Columbus's original destination; to his dying day, he believed that he had landed on the east coast of Asia.

Canary Islands

Islands that Columbus and his men crossed several times on their way to and from the New World.

Santa Maria

Columbus's main ship.

Pinta

A second ship included on the voyage.

Nina

The third and final ship for Columbus's first voyage.

The Admiral

Columbus's title and what many men and biographers called him.



Cuba

One of the main countries that Columbus and his men explored.

Hispaniola

Another large land mass that Columbus and his men explored.



Themes

Colonization

The most important and pervasive theme in *The Four Voyages* is that of colonization. Columbus is convinced throughout the entire journey that he is doing God's work; he is also exceedingly grateful to the Spanish sovereigns, though terrified that they will reverse their opinion of him. This attitude, which comes through not only in his letters to them but also in his log-book and letters to others, shows the precarious nature of his career as an explorer. Importantly, these chronicles also demonstrate the nuanced attitudes Columbus and the Europeans he traveled with had towards the natives of the islands that they found. While colonizers are normally depicted as evil men trying to "manifest destiny," Columbus genuinely tries to get the natives on his side. While this is mostly for his own benefit (so that they will more easily give in to his demands), he also refuses to take gold from them by force and insists on trading. Moreover, he and his men rarely fight the "Indians," as they call the natives, unless they are attacked first. Though at the beginning he attempts to capture slaves for the Spanish sovereigns, he later comes to decide that he will capture only the idolaters and not those who can be converted to Christianity. In addition, even when his men almost starved, he refused to let them kill the natives traveling along, insisting that they were all the same in God's eyes. Though Columbus and his men certainly negatively affected the lives of the men and women living in this part of the world (the accounts do not shy away from accounts of rape and theft), the first-hand accounts provide a more nuanced view of colonialism than is usual.

Catholicism

Though at times it appears to be just a tip of the hat to the Catholic monarchs, Columbus views his expeditions through an extremely religious perspective. He writes that the natives could easily be converted to Christianity as they mimic everything the Europeans do; in addition, he suggests enslaving only the idolaters and leaving the Christian natives (or those converted) to go free. As his trips progress, however, Columbus appears to believe more and more in his mission: he purports to treat the natives with as much respect as he treats his own men (which may not be saying much at times). He writes negatively of idolaters of the cult of Mahomet, and he prays to God during many moments of extreme duress, such as when he is in chains traveling back to Europe, or in the heart of the worst storm he has ever seen. However, Columbus's religious leanings may be in response to Queen Isabel's fervent Christianity, as he relied on her support to keep funding his expeditions; in fact, while he wanted to search for gold and treasures in the New World, she saw it as her duty as a Christian to convert the natives instead. While sometimes Columbus refers to his "men," he also refers to his crew as "The Christians," as opposed to the natives.



Effective Governance

Columbus's Four Voyages also demonstrate the difficulties of establishing effective governments, particularly in places with unfamiliar social structures. In this case, of course, Columbus and the Europeans were not trying to merge with the natives so much as dominate them; nevertheless, Columbus quickly found that the means of governance that had worked back in Western Europe did not work as well in the New World. For example, when his men mutinied, Columbus did not have the option of punishing them as he would have back home. If he had done so, he would have risked an outright battle with them, as well as the possible defection of the rest of his remaining loyal men. He writes in one letter that he is expected to govern as though he were in Sicily, or some place with an established government; however, the same rules did not apply. Columbus's attitude towards his crew appears to vary greatly; though he never speaks of them with outright disdain, he does mention events that throw his management skills into question. For example, he offered a prize to the first man to spot land. When a crew member saw land, though, Columbus said that he had seen it first and refused to pay the prize he had initially offered, keeping it for himself.



Style

Perspective

The perspective of *The Four Voyages* shifts depending on the source of the document included. Overall, Cohen (the editor) attempts to provide an even-handed view of the four voyages through a wide variety of sources, his own notes (which disprove certain claims and clarify the modern-day names of territories Columbus discovered). Sources in the book include:

Columbus's own log-book;

Hernando Columbus's biography of his father;

Royal Historian Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo's history of the Indies;

Letters from Columbus to various people, including the Spanish sovereigns;

Letters from Dr. Chanca, who accompanied Columbus on his second voyage; and

Letters from Diego Mendez, who accompanied Columbus on his last voyage.

Overall, most of the sources support the idea that Columbus went to conquer the New World for the glory of God and Spain, though they all mention ulterior motives, such as wealth and women, as other motives for exploration.

Tone

Because of the variety of documents included, the tone varies widely throughout *Four Voyages*. However, due to the heavy reliance of the editor on the biography of Columbus's son and on Columbus's own letters, the tone tends to be extremely supportive of Columbus and sympathetic to his plight during the uprisings and mutinies he experienced throughout his trip. Other documents, such as those by the doctor and the crew member, have a similarly sympathetic and supportive tone. The section by the royal historian does have a slightly more negative tone, as he discusses Columbus's humble origins and the fact that he might have been Jewish (which Cohen claims is not true), the idea that the islands might have been discovered by previous kings, and so on. In addition, the objective introduction clarifies several important points, while the footnotes clarify blatant fallacies and editors notes provide different perspectives on the colonizing situation.



Structure

Four Voyages to the New World is structured by trip; that is, chronologically. For voyages for which Cohen included several excerpts of Hernando Colon's biography of his father, these excerpts are usually dispersed among other sources to provide a more balanced perspective. The accounts of each voyage include a map of the route Columbus and his men took after each section, as well as one map displaying all four voyages. The first voyage, from 1492-3, is documented with Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo's story of Columbus's origins and the beginnings of his voyage, Columbus's Log-Book, his son's biography, and the Admiral's personal letters (it is important to note that the Log-Book was edited by Bartolomé de las Casas, who added his own notes in places). The second voyage, from 1493-6 includes excerpts from the biography as well as a letter written by Doctor Chanca. The third voyage, from 1498-1500, includes more excerpts from Hernando Colon's biography, a letter from Columbus to the sovereigns, and a letter from Columbus to the Governess of Don Juan of Castile. The fourth and final voyage, by far the shortest section, includes a letter from Columbus to the King and Queen of Spain, Diego Mendez's account of the trip, and a final excerpt from Columbus's son's biography.



Quotes

"It is better to doubt what we do not know than to insist on facts that are not proven."
First Voyage, p. 29

"From this he develops an argument that, while admitting Columbus's courage, minimizes his achievement and suggests that he was not discovering but rediscovering the New World."
First Voyage, p. 31

"God has restored this realm to the kings of Spain after many centuries."
First Voyage, p. 31

"It is no marvel that such Catholic princes should be more concerned with winning souls for salvation than with treasure and new estates which would only increase their royal cares and responsibilities, nor that they decided to back this project of discovery."
First Voyage, p. 35

"[Y]our Highnesses as Catholic princes and devoted propagators of the holy Christian faith have always been enemies of the sect of Mahomet and of all idolatries and heresies."
First Voyage, p. 37

"These people seemed to us more civilized than those elsewhere."
Second Voyage, p. 135

"When they understood that we hated these people on account of their cannibalism, they were highly delighted."
Second Voyage, p. 135

"These Indians seem so well disposed that they could be converted if we had an interpreter."
Second Voyage, p. 154

"After Caonabo's capture the reason became so peaceful that a Christian could go anywhere he pleased alone and in complete safety."
Second Voyage, p. 190

"[The Earth] is not round as they describe it, but the shape of a pear, which is round everywhere except at the stalk, where it juts out a long way; or that it is like a round ball, on part of which is something like a woman's nipple."
Third Voyage, p. 218

"In every land to which your Highnesses' ships sail, I have a tall cross erected on each cape, and I proclaim your Highnesses' greatness to all the people informing them that you are lords of Spain."
Third Voyage, p. 224



"If it is new for me to complain against the world, its habit of ill-treating me is an old one."

Third Voyage, p. 265

"Their Highnesses at last acceded to my request, but not as all as the situation demanded. But so let it be, since that is their pleasure."

Third Voyage, p. 268

"I say that the world is not as great as is commonly believed and that one degree on the Equator is $56 \frac{2}{3}$ miles, which may be exactly proved."

Fourth Voyage, p. 289



Topics for Discussion

In addition to Columbus' letters and log-books, several other accounts of his voyages are given. How do these differ from Columbus's own accounts? On what topics do the accounts especially diverge?

Columbus encountered different problems on each of his four voyages. Compare and contrast these problems and their eventual outcomes.

Several uprisings threatened Columbus's journeys. Who caused these uprisings, and what were their main complaints? In your opinion, where they justified based on the narrative provided here?

Columbus takes a particular viewpoint towards the natives he encounters on his travels. What is his attitude towards them, and how does it change throughout his voyages?

Columbus's family accompanied him on several voyages. What were their roles, and how did this affect other aspects of the exploration (morale, governance, etc.)?

What were Columbus's views on the shape of the earth and its geography? How did these views change throughout his voyages?

Though the book mainly consists of primary documents, what effect does their editing and organization have on the reader?