

Letter from Christopher Columbus on Returning from His First Voyage to the Americas, 1493

by Tim Bailey (created in 2012, revised in 2023)

Tim Bailey taught middle and elementary school in Utah for over two decades. He was named the 2009 National History Teacher of the Year and is the Gilder Lehrman Institute's director of curriculum development and instructional design.

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME: Two or three 45-minute periods

The unit is divided into five lessons, but after modeling the summary organizer format in Lesson 1, another lesson may be assigned as homework and two lessons may be combined in one class session. In addition, the essay could be assigned as homework.

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on a primary source. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance.

Over the course of five lessons, students will read, analyze, and gain a clear understanding of Christopher Columbus's letter of March 1493 to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain announcing the discovery of the Americas. The first four lessons require students to read excerpts from the letter "like a detective." Employing summary organizers, practice, review, and discussion, they will master the technique of identifying keywords, creating summaries of document sections, and, as an assessment in the final lesson, writing an argumentative essay.

Students will be able to

- Use a primary source to identify authors' motivations or structural incentives (i.e., natural resources made exploration profitable)
- Use a primary source to identify significant historical figures (i.e., Christopher Columbus, King Ferdinand, and Queen Isabella)
- Analyze a primary source document using close-reading strategies

- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of the document
- Summarize the essential meaning of the document
- Collaborate effectively with classmates
- Write an argumentative essay using text-based evidence

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did Christopher Columbus describe who and what he found in the Caribbean?
- What did Columbus suggest were the Caribbean’s most notable attributes?
- How did Columbus’s expedition impact the Native peoples of the Caribbean?

MATERIALS

- Teacher’s Resource: Historical Background: “Christopher Columbus’s First Voyage to the Americas and His Report to Ferdinand and Isabella” by Kathleen DuVal, Professor of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Teacher’s Resource: Christopher Columbus’s Letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, 1493, excerpts from *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus with Other Original Documents Relating to His Four Voyages to the New World*, translated and edited by R. H. Major (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1847), 1–17. A copy of this publication is available on Google Books: books.google.com/books?id=eIwC20ya3cIC&.
- Summary Organizers 1–4 with excerpts from Christopher Columbus’s Letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, 1493
- Smartboard, overhead projector, or similar device

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to the Americas and His Report to Ferdinand and Isabella

by Kathleen DuVal, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Christopher Columbus led the first recorded voyage across the Atlantic from Europe to the Americas. He was born in 1451 in Genoa, which today is part of Italy but then was its own republic. Like many men from Genoa, Columbus became a sailor and an expert in sailing and navigating. At the time, travel between Europe and Asia either went by land on the Silk Road or by water around the southern tip of Africa.

Columbus became convinced that he could sail west from Europe and reach Asia from the Atlantic Ocean. He persuaded King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to fund his voyage. They saw great opportunity in a possible route to Asia that would avoid the Ottoman Empire, which controlled the Silk Road. They hoped to profit from trade in spices and other goods from Asia. They outfitted three small ships for him, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María*.

Sometimes people say that Columbus was unusual in realizing that the world was round, but in fact navigators in the 1400s agreed on that point—their methods of guiding ships by the stars wouldn't have worked if the world was flat. The debate in the 1400s was over the size of the earth. Columbus believed it was relatively small, under 3,000 nautical miles in circumference, a reasonable distance for his ships to travel to the east coast of Asia with the amount of food and water they could carry. In fact, the distance was over 10,000 nautical miles. Luckily for Columbus and his men, though, that distance turned out not to be all open ocean. The American continents lay in between, and the eastern parts of North America were close enough to Europe and Africa that Columbus's ships made it there in about five weeks—about the amount of time he had (inaccurately) calculated it would take to get to Asia.

The three ships left Spain in August 1492, stopped at the Canary Islands off the coast of northwestern Africa, and landed in what's now the Bahamas in early October. Columbus and his men briefly explored several islands in the Bahamas and the northern coasts of Cuba and Española (Hispaniola: today's Haiti and Dominican Republic). Columbus believed he had reached Asia—the region from Japan through China to India that Europeans called “the Indies”—and so he called the people that he met “Indios” or “Indians.” In fact, the Indigenous peoples of the islands that Columbus visited were Taínos (sometimes called Arawaks), a large language-cultural group split into many smaller polities on many islands.

Columbus wrote a letter during his voyage back to Spain in 1493 for immediate delivery to Ferdinand and Isabella. A copy was sent to Rome, where it was published in Latin and disseminated across Europe. It was important to Columbus to describe for the king and queen and their advisors all of the products that they could reap from the islands and how easy he thought it would be to get them. The letter also displays the importance of religion to him and the monarchs—they were all deeply religious Catholic Christians.

There was no common language between Columbus and the Taínos. Everything that Columbus reported that the Taínos “said” was guesswork. Columbus left several men behind on the

islands, but when he returned, they had made trouble with the Taínos, and Columbus's men had all been killed. It was a sign that the Taínos were not as gullible and passive as Columbus portrayed them in this letter.

Kathleen DuVal is a professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her publications include Native Nations: A Millennium in North America (2024) and The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent (2006). She is the co-author, with Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, of the US history textbook Give Me Liberty! An American History (7th ed., 2022).

LESSON 1

by Tim Bailey (created in 2012, revised in 2023)

OVERVIEW

Students will be asked to “read like a detective” and discover what Christopher Columbus was writing about in his 1493 letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain by understanding what is explicitly stated and drawing logical inferences. They will demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary of the excerpt from the letter and then restating that summary in their own words. The first lesson is a whole-class exercise.

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Grade Levels: 7–12

Recommended Time: Two or three 45-minute periods

Students will be able to

- Use a primary source to identify authors’ motivations or structural incentives (i.e., natural resources made exploration profitable)
- Use a primary source to identify significant historical figures (i.e., Christopher Columbus, King Ferdinand, and Queen Isabella)
- Analyze a primary source document using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of the document
- Summarize the essential meaning of the document
- Collaborate effectively with classmates

MATERIALS

- Teacher’s Resource: Historical Background: “Christopher Columbus’s First Voyage to the Americas and His Report to Ferdinand and Isabella” by Kathleen DuVal, Professor of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Teacher’s Resource: Christopher Columbus’s Letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, 1493 (Excerpts). Source: *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus with Other Original Documents Relating to His Four Voyages to the New World*, translated and edited by R. H. Major (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1847), 1–17. A copy of this publication is available on Google Books: books.google.com/books?id=eIwC20ya3cIC&. This handout includes all four excerpts used in the unit.
- Summary Organizer 1
- Smartboard, overhead projector, or similar device

Additional Resources

- Christopher Columbus’s Letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, 1493 in *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus with Other Original Documents Relating to His Four Voyages to the New World*, translated and edited by R. H. Major (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1847), 1–17. A copy of this book is available on Google Books: books.google.com/books?id=eIwC20ya3clC&.
- *Epistola Christofori Colom* [The Barcelona Letter], 1493, page 1. This Latin edition of Christopher Columbus’s letter to Ferdinand and Isabella was published by the Vatican and disseminated across Europe. Source: The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC01427, gilderlehrman.org/collections/d7331543-dd74-4d6c-9734-625542862574.
- Spotlight on a Primary Source: “Columbus reports on his first voyage, 1493,” The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/columbus-reports-his-first-voyage-1493.
- Video, “Inside the Vault: Columbus Reports on His First Voyage” with Curator of Books and Manuscripts Beth Huffer on the Gilder Lehrman website: gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/videos/columbus-reports-his-first-voyage-1493-document-minute.

PROCEDURE

1. Prepare for class by reading the Historical Background on page 4. You may determine how much of the background to discuss with the class. The goal is for the students to develop ideas and draw conclusions based solely on Columbus’s words, so you don’t want to reveal too much about the events and outcomes surrounding the 1492 voyage.
2. You may choose to distribute the handout that includes all four excerpts and “share read” the text (as described below) with the students right away or focus solely on the first selection in Summary Organizer 1 without revealing the rest of the document.
3. Distribute copies of Summary Organizer 1 and display it in a format large enough for the whole class to see. This activity sheet contains the first section of Columbus’s letter of 1493 to Ferdinand and Isabella.
4. “Share read” the text with the students. To do this have the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).

5. Explain to the students that they will learn how to do in-depth analysis for themselves by reading, understanding, and summarizing Christopher Columbus’s words. In this first lesson, the whole class will work together to summarize the first selection from the text.
6. Describe the process for the class: The first objective is to select keywords from the text and use those words to create a summary sentence that gets at the gist of what Columbus wrote in the first section of the document.
7. Guidelines for Selecting the Keywords: Keywords are important contributors to the meaning of the text. They are usually nouns or verbs. Advise students not to pick “connector” words (*are, is, the, and, so, etc.*). The number of keywords depends on the length of the text. This selection is 113 words, so the class can pick seven or eight keywords. Since the students must know the meaning of the words they choose, you will have opportunities to work on context clues, word analysis, and dictionary skills to discover word meanings. There is a tendency for students to select “impressive” words, even if they do not know what they mean.
8. Students will now select seven or eight words from the text that they believe are keywords. They can circle, underline, or highlight these words.
9. Survey the class for the most popular keywords selected. You may write them down and have the class discuss the options and vote on the final choice, based on guidance from you. For example, after some negotiation, the class could select the following words: *discovered, peopled, possession, without resistance* (two words can occasionally be allowed when they represent a single idea), *name*, and *islands*. Have the students write the agreed-upon words in the Keywords section in the organizer.
10. Explain to the class that they will use these keywords to write a sentence that summarizes the meaning of the first section of Columbus’s letter. This summary sentence should be developed through a whole-class process of discussion and negotiation. For example, they might write, “I discovered islands with many people on them, took possession of the islands without resistance, and then named the islands.” The students might decide they don’t need some of the words to make the sentence even more streamlined. This is part of the negotiation process. The students will copy the final negotiated sentence into the Keyword Summary section in the organizer.
11. Guide the students in restating the summary sentence in their own words, not having to use the keywords from Columbus’s text. For example, “I took land from Indigenous people and renamed the islands.” Again, this is a class negotiation.
12. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult. The students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or on a separate vocabulary form.

LESSON 2

by Tim Bailey (created in 2012, revised in 2023)

OVERVIEW

Students will be asked to “read like a detective” and discover what Christopher Columbus was writing about in his 1493 letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain by understanding what is explicitly stated and drawing logical inferences. They will demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary of the text and then restating that summary in their own words. In this lesson they will work with partners and in small groups.

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Grade Levels: 7–12

Recommended Time: Two or three 45-minute periods

Students will be able to

- Use a primary source to identify authors’ motivations or structural incentives (i.e., natural resources made exploration profitable)
- Use a primary source to identify significant historical figures (i.e., Christopher Columbus, King Ferdinand, and Queen Isabella)
- Analyze a primary source document using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of the document
- Summarize the essential meaning of the document
- Collaborate effectively with classmates

MATERIALS

- Summary Organizer 2
- Smartboard, overhead projector, or similar device

PROCEDURE

1. Lead a discussion of what the class learned in the previous lesson and what the first part of Columbus’s letter conveys. Explain that the class will continue with the second section of Columbus’s letter with partners and in small groups.
2. Pair students up and distribute Summary Organizer 2 with the second selection from Columbus’s letter. Share read the text with the class as described in Lesson 1. You may display the summary organizer in a format large enough for the whole class to see.

3. Review the procedure from Lesson 1, reminding students that they will select keywords from the text, use the keywords to summarize the text, and then restate the summary in their own words. Because this paragraph is shorter (98 words) than the last one, they may pick only five to seven keywords.
4. After the students in each pair have chosen their keywords, they should write those words in the Keywords section of the organizer.
5. Now put each pair of students into a group of four. Be strategic in how you form the groups to ensure active participation by all group members. Circulate to ensure that all groups are negotiating successfully and choosing appropriate words.
6. These groups should negotiate to finalize their selection of keywords. All members of the group should write the finalized keywords in the Keywords section in the organizer.
7. Each group will use the selected words to build a sentence that summarizes Columbus's message in this part of the text. Circulate among the groups to monitor their progress and to make sure that all students are contributing.
8. Ask the groups to share out their summary sentences. This should serve as a catalyst for a discussion that will provide evaluative feedback on two matters: How successful were the students in recognizing Columbus's main idea(s)? How careful were the students to use Columbus's keywords in the summary?
9. Each group will now restate the summary sentence in their own words. Again, this is a group negotiation. After they have decided on a sentence, they should write the final version into the organizer.
10. Have the groups share out and discuss the clarity and quality of the restatements.
11. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult. The students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or on a separate vocabulary form.

LESSON 3

by Tim Bailey (created in 2012, revised in 2023)

OVERVIEW

Students will be asked to “read like a detective” and discover what Christopher Columbus was writing about in his 1493 letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain by understanding what is explicitly stated and drawing logical inferences. They will demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary of the text and then restating that summary in their own words. In this lesson the students will work individually unless you think they need another day of additional support from a partner or small group.

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Grade Levels: 7–12

Recommended Time: Two or three 45-minute periods

Students will be able to

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- Summarize the essential meaning of the document

MATERIALS

- Summary Organizer 3

PROCEDURE

1. Discuss the text summaries the students came up with for the first and second sections of the text in the previous lessons.
2. Hand out Summary Organizer 3, which contains the third selection from Columbus’s letter. You may choose to share read the text with the students as described in Lesson 1.
3. Review the process of selecting keywords, writing a summary using those keywords, and then restating the summary in their own words. Tell the students that they will be working independently on this part of the text.

4. Because this paragraph is 177 words, the students can pick up to ten keywords. After choosing their words, they will write them in the Keywords section of the organizers. If students select “race” as one of the keywords, it should be explained that “race” was used to describe a group of people united by allegiance and religion; the word did not mean exactly what it means today in terms of identifying people by appearance and ancestry. The definition of words can change over time, compounding the already substantial challenges that are inherent to understanding historical documents.
5. The students will build a sentence that summarizes the third selection from the text. They will write their summary sentences into their organizers.
6. The students will now restate the summary sentence in their own words and write the restatement into the organizers.
7. Have the students share out their restated summaries and discuss the clarity and quality of the different interpretations of Columbus’s views.
8. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult; the students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or a separate vocabulary form.

LESSON 4

by Tim Bailey (created in 2012, revised in 2023)

OVERVIEW

Students will be asked to “read like a detective” and discover what Christopher Columbus was writing about in his 1493 letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain by understanding what is explicitly stated and drawing logical inferences. They will demonstrate these skills by writing a succinct summary of the text and then restating that summary in their own words. In this lesson the students will be working individually.

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Grade Levels: 7–12

Recommended Time: Two or three 45-minute periods

Students will be able to

- Use a primary source to identify authors’ motivations or structural incentives (i.e., natural resources made exploration profitable)
- Use a primary source to identify significant historical figures (i.e., Christopher Columbus, King Ferdinand, and Queen Isabella)
- Analyze a primary source document using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of the document
- Summarize the essential meaning of the document

MATERIALS

- Summary Organizer 4

PROCEDURE

1. Discuss the text summaries the students came up with for the first, second, and third sections of the text in the previous lessons.
2. Hand out Summary Organizer 4, which contains the fourth selection from Columbus’s letter. You may choose to share read the text with the students as described in Lesson 1.
3. Review the process of selecting keywords, writing a summary using those keywords, and restating the summary in their own words. Students will work independently on this section of the text.
4. Because this paragraph is more than 200 words, students will pick up to ten keywords.

5. Have the students share out their restated summaries and discuss the clarity and quality of the different interpretations of Columbus's views.
6. Wrap-up: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult. The students can record these words and their meaning on the back of the organizer or a separate vocabulary form.

LESSON 5

by Tim Bailey (created in 2012, revised in 2023)

OVERVIEW

This lesson has two objectives. First, the students will synthesize the work of the last four lessons and demonstrate that they understand Christopher Columbus’s 1493 letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. Second, the students will respond to a prompt in a short persuasive or argumentative essay that requires them to draw inferences from the text and support their conclusions with evidence from the text.

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Grade Levels: 7–12

Recommended Time: Two or three 45-minute periods

Students will be able to

- Use a primary source to identify authors’ motivations or structural incentives (i.e., natural resources made exploration profitable)
- Use a primary source to identify significant historical figures (i.e., Christopher Columbus, King Ferdinand, and Queen Isabella)
- Analyze a primary source document using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of the document
- Summarize the essential meaning of the document
- Write an argumentative essay using text-based evidence

MATERIALS

- Completed Summary Organizers 1–4
- Smartboard, overhead projector, or similar device

PROCEDURE

1. Ask the students for their best summary of the first section of the text from Summary Organizer 1. You may write this short sentence on the overhead or similar device. Continue with the other three selections from the text. When you are finished, the students should have a summary of Columbus’s letter in a few sentences to help them organize their essay.
2. Each student will write a short persuasive or argumentative essay addressing one of the prompts below. If the students are not familiar with writing an argumentative essay, you

can lead a short lesson on the process and then assign the essay for homework or for the next lesson. Remind the students that any arguments they make must be backed up with words taken directly from Columbus’s letter. The first prompt is designed to be the easiest.

Prompts

1. What evidence did Columbus use to support his claim that further exploration would be very beneficial for King Ferdinand, Queen Isabella, and Spain?
2. In this letter Columbus enthusiastically described his expedition and claimed that a “little assistance” would be sufficient to yield great results. Using Columbus’s own words, suggest what challenges would require planning and money to overcome if a future expedition was undertaken.
3. Using the text of the letter, explain what incentivized exploration. Then explain how explorers limited the ability of Indigenous peoples to resist explorers’ ventures.

Christopher Columbus's Letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, 1493 (Excerpts)

A Letter addressed to the noble Lord Raphael Sanchez, Treasurer to their most invincible Majesties, Ferdinand and Isabella, King and Queen of Spain, by Christopher Columbus, to whom our age is greatly indebted, treating of the islands of India recently discovered beyond the Ganges, to explore which he had been sent eight months before under the auspices and at the expense of their said Majesties.

. . . Thirty-three days after my departure from Cadiz I reached the Indian sea, where I discovered many islands, thickly peopled, of which I took possession without resistance in the name of our most illustrious Monarch, by public proclamation and with unfurled banners. To the first of these islands, which is called by the Indians Guanahani, I gave the name of the blessed Saviour (San Salvador), relying upon whose protection I had reached this as well as the other islands; to each of these I also gave a name, ordering that one should be called Santa Maria de la Concepcion, another Fernandina, the third Isabella, the fourth Juana, and so with all the rest respectively. . . .

. . . In that island also which I have before said we named Española, there are mountains of very great size and beauty, vast plains, groves, and very fruitful fields, admirably adapted for tillage, pasture, and habitation. The convenience and excellence of the harbours in this island, and the abundance of the rivers, so indispensable to the health of man, surpass anything that would be believed by one who had not seen it. The trees, herbage, and fruits of Española are very different from those of Juana, and moreover it abounds in various kinds of spices, gold, and other metals. . . .

. . . On my arrival at that sea, I had taken some Indians by force from the first island that I came to, in order that they might learn our language, and communicate to us what they knew respecting the country; which plan succeeded excellently, and was a great advantage to us, for in a short time, either by gestures and signs, or by words, we were enabled to understand each other. These men are still travelling with me, and although they have been with us now a long time, they continue to entertain the idea that I have descended from heaven; and on our arrival at any new place they published this, crying out immediately with a loud voice to the other Indians, "Come, come and look upon beings of a celestial race": upon which both women and men, children and adults, young men and old, when they got rid of the fear they at first entertained, would come out in throngs, crowding the roads to see us, some bringing food, others drink, with astonishing affection and kindness. . . .

. . . Finally, to compress into few words the entire summary of my voyage and speedy return, and of the advantages derivable therefrom, I promise, that with a little assistance afforded me by our most invincible sovereigns, I will procure them as much gold as they need, as great a quantity of spices, of cotton, and of mastic (which is only found in Chios), and as many men for the service of the navy as their Majesties may require. I promise also rhubarb and other sorts of drugs, which I am persuaded the men whom I have left in the aforesaid fortress have found already and will continue to find; for I myself have tarried nowhere longer than I was compelled to do by the winds, except in the city of Navidad, while I provided for the building of the fortress, and took the necessary precautions for the perfect security of the men I left there. Although all I have related may appear to be wonderful and unheard of, yet the results of my voyage would have been more astonishing if I had had at my disposal such ships as I required. But these great and marvellous results are not to be attributed to any merit of mine, but to the holy Christian faith, and to the piety and religion of our Sovereigns; for that which the unaided intellect of man could not compass, the spirit of God has granted to human exertions, for God is wont to hear the prayers of his servants who love his precepts even to the performance of apparent impossibilities. . . .

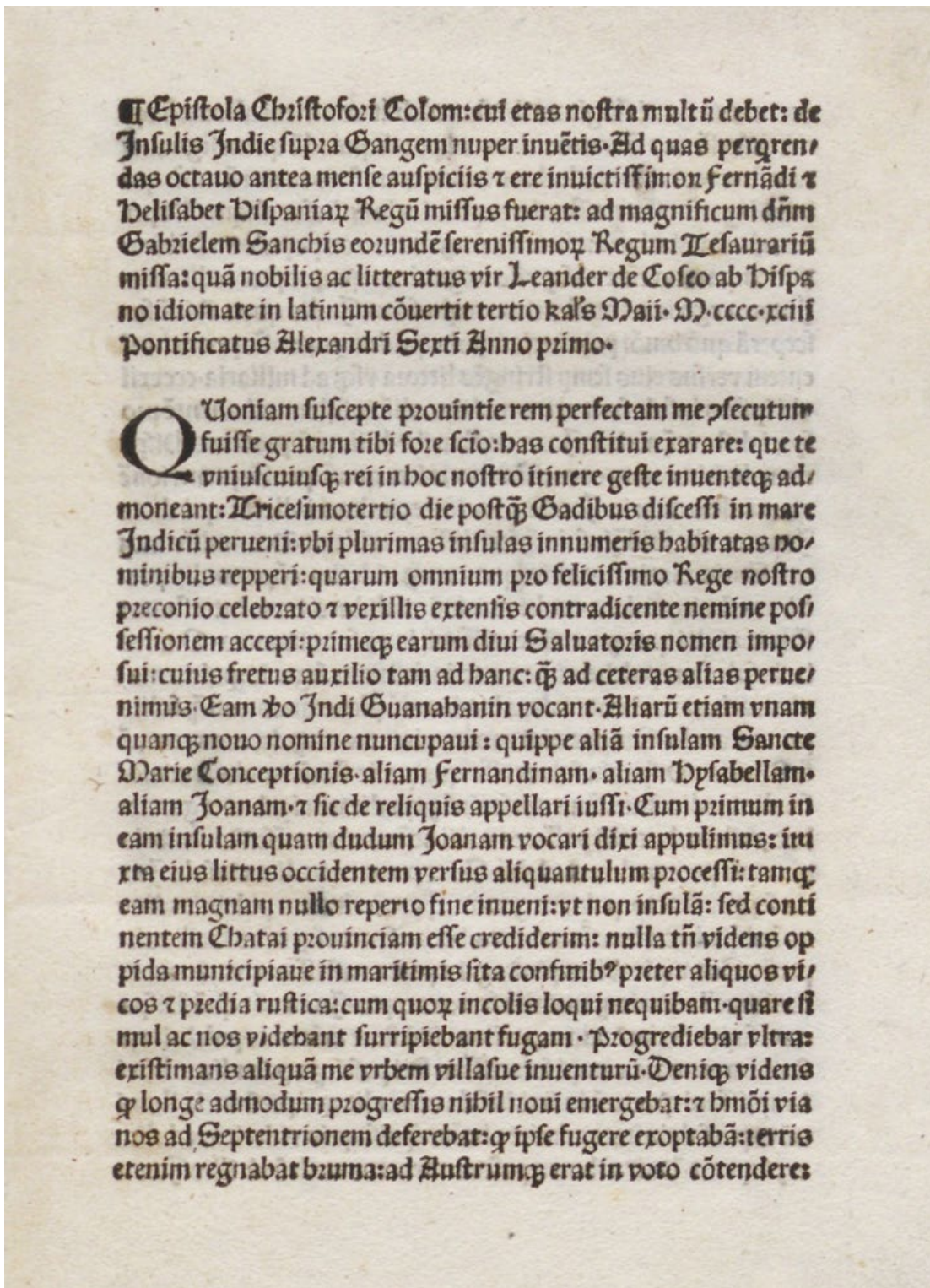
Such are the events which I have briefly described. Farewell.

Lisbon, the 14th of March.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, Admiral of the Fleet of the Ocean.

Source: *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus with Other Original Documents Relating to His Four Voyages to the New World*, translated and edited by R. H. Major (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1847), 1–17.

Epistola Christofori Colom, 1493, p. 1



First page of the *Epistola Christofori Colom* [The Barcelona Letter], 1493. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC01427)

Summary Organizer 1

Original Text:

. . . Thirty-three days after my departure from Cadiz I reached the Indian sea, where I discovered many islands, thickly peopled, of which I took possession without resistance in the name of our most illustrious Monarch, by public proclamation and with unfurled banners. To the first of these islands, which is called by the Indians Guanahani, I gave the name of the blessed Saviour (San Salvador), relying upon whose protection I had reached this as well as the other islands; to each of these I also gave a name, ordering that one should be called Santa Maria de la Concepcion, another Fernandina, the third Isabella, the fourth Juana, and so with all the rest respectively. . . .

Keywords:

Keyword Summary:

In Your Own Words:

Summary Organizer 2

Original Text:

. . . In that island also which I have before said we named Española, there are mountains of very great size and beauty, vast plains, groves, and very fruitful fields, admirably adapted for tillage, pasture, and habitation. The convenience and excellence of the harbours in this island, and the abundance of the rivers, so indispensable to the health of man, surpass anything that would be believed by one who had not seen it. The trees, herbage, and fruits of Española are very different from those of Juana, and moreover it abounds in various kinds of spices, gold, and other metals. . . .

Keywords:

Keyword Summary:

In Your Own Words:

Summary Organizer 3

Original Text:

. . . On my arrival at that sea, I had taken some Indians by force from the first island that I came to, in order that they might learn our language, and communicate to us what they knew respecting the country; which plan succeeded excellently, and was a great advantage to us, for in a short time, either by gestures and signs, or by words, we were enabled to understand each other. These men are still travelling with me, and although they have been with us now a long time, they continue to entertain the idea that I have descended from heaven; and on our arrival at any new place they published this, crying out immediately with a loud voice to the other Indians, "Come, come and look upon beings of a celestial race": upon which both women and men, children and adults, young men and old, when they got rid of the fear they at first entertained, would come out in throngs, crowding the roads to see us, some bringing food, others drink, with astonishing affection and kindness. . . .

Keywords:

Keyword Summary:

In Your Own Words:

Summary Organizer 4

Original Text:

. . . Finally, to compress into few words the entire summary of my voyage and speedy return, and of the advantages derivable therefrom, I promise, that with a little assistance afforded me by our most invincible sovereigns, I will procure them as much gold as they need, as great a quantity of spices, of cotton, and of mastic (which is only found in Chios), and as many men for the service of the navy as their Majesties may require. I promise also rhubarb and other sorts of drugs, which I am persuaded the men whom I have left in the aforesaid fortress have found already and will continue to find; for I myself have tarried nowhere longer than I was compelled to do by the winds, except in the city of Navidad, while I provided for the building of the fortress, and took the necessary precautions for the perfect security of the men I left there. Although all I have related may appear to be wonderful and unheard of, yet the results of my voyage would have been more astonishing if I had had at my disposal such ships as I required. But these great and marvellous results are not to be attributed to any merit of mine, but to the holy Christian faith, and to the piety and religion of our Sovereigns; for that which the unaided intellect of man could not compass, the spirit of God has granted to human exertions, for God is wont to hear the prayers of his servants who love his precepts even to the performance of apparent impossibilities. . . .

Keywords:

Keyword Summary:

In Your Own Words:
