

# The Tragic and Triumphant Historiography of Christopher Columbus

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## Process Paper

The perspectives of Columbus's infamous voyages to the Americas reflect both tragedy and triumph.

At first, my research process consisted of analyzing different viewpoints of Columbus's voyages to write a long-winded, non-analytical research paper. In the first part of this paper, I delved into who (what I thought) the "real," historically accurate image of Columbus was, a man whose actions were merely tragic. This part of my paper was greatly influenced and shaped by the book *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James Loewen, a book that examined and concluded that the Columbian history conveyed in textbooks is flawed and mythologized. In the next three parts of my paper, I'd delved into what the "myth" that I had falsely understood to be a single, static, triumphant image throughout history, and the creation and manifestation of this image throughout history. In the last part of my argument, I conveyed what I thought the modern day ambivalence was over the subject: mere public controversy that led to the celebration of Indigenous People's Day. After receiving feedback, I realized that I'd been writing with the subconscious pretense that the tragic perspective was the correct interpretation of the voyages, and thus allowed this bias to shape how the rest of my research was presented. I've learned now that to write a historically sound paper, I need to present the different ways that Columbus has been viewed throughout American history as unbiased as possible and analyze the circumstances and causes of these viewpoints. In studying the historiography of Columbus's voyages, I've sought out to using primary sources not only written during the period surrounding his voyages, but also those written during times in history where the Columbian image has been warped and utilized.

I made the decision to do a research paper because I wanted to challenge myself to put together a well-written composition that fully conveys the research I've conducted across in a digestible way.

During the period known as the "Age of Discovery", Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus completed four voyages to the Caribbean islands. Throughout American history, Columbus has consistently been glorified though the historical record presents a much more demeaning story. The account of this pivotal time in history marking Columbus' voyages has been warped and camouflaged time and time again throughout American history to reflect narratives of both triumph and tragedy. The historical legacy left behind by Columbus's voyages is a thread that has been deeply knit into the fabric of American history and culture. The issue of Columbus' voyages continues to be plagued by cultural ambivalence and controversy today over whether he is a figure in history to be honored or denounced.

## Essay

During the period known as the “Age of Discovery”, Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus completed four voyages to the Caribbean islands. Throughout American history, Columbus has consistently been glorified though the historical record presents a much more demeaning story. The account of this pivotal time in history marking Columbus’s voyages has been warped and camouflaged time and time again throughout American history to reflect narratives of both triumph and tragedy. The historical legacy left behind by Columbus’s voyages is a thread deeply knit into the fabric of American history and culture. The issue of Columbus’ voyages continues to be plagued by cultural ambivalence and controversy today, one that is over whether he is a figure in history to be honored or denounced.

To fully comprehend the complexities of how Christopher Columbus, the myth, has been stitched into the fabric of American history and how the initial mythologization came about, we must first establish what the historical record from Columbus’s own time indicates. Columbus’s voyages were the paramount variable in revolutionizing life in the Old World, and even with the glorious image presented by Columbus through his journals and letters, at the end of his life, he was not only viewed negatively by European society but outcasted and forgotten. When Christopher Columbus returned to Spain from the first of his voyages on March 15th, 1493, he promptly sent a letter and journal proclaiming his discoveries on the Bahamian islands to his sponsors, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. In these writings Columbus, who was given the title of governor and viceroy of the lands he discovered, wrote of his discovery of islands like Juana, claiming that “through it flow[ed] many... health-giving rivers...[with mountains] easy to be traversed” and “full of the greatest variety of trees reaching to the stars...which as readily

surpass ours in height and beauty as do all the other trees, herbs, and fruits” (Lehrman Institute, 5). Exaggerating his findings on the lands he reached, Columbus accredited himself as being the conductor of the discovery of these lands with features far more superior and prosperous than those in Spain. Columbus continued in the letter of his kindness towards the indigenous people stating, “I gave whatever I had, cloth and many other things, to whomsoever I approached... without any return being made to me” (Lehrman Institute 5). Columbus finished his letter with a promise, stating, “if I am supported by some little assistance from [the Monarchs], I will give them as much gold as they have need of... and as many heathen slaves as their majesties may choose to demand” (Lehrman Institute 8). Despite the grandiose image Columbus presented of himself as the humane conductor of the discovery of luxuriant lands, at the end of his life, Columbus was viewed negatively and disgracefully in the public sphere.

Near the end of Columbus’s third voyage, Columbus was faced with mutiny from the Spanish settlers in Hispaniola in response to starvation and a lack of resources. When word of this rebellion, the harsh treatment of the Indians, and Columbus’s maladministration as governor reached Spain, Columbus was arrested and sent back to Spain ignominiously. Before the Monarchs, Columbus was stripped of his titles and over the course of the next year, numerous appointments of a governor, overseer, treasurer, chief justice, had been made as well as three contracts for new explorers to embark on voyages of discovery. As William Phillips put it “In the evolution of Spain’s American empire, Columbus was now only one among many” – an obscure character in history (Phillips 230).

In his publication of *Historia de las Indias*, Bartolome de las Casas, known as one of the greatest historians of the Americas, provides some insight as to how Columbus was viewed in

the early 16th century. Las Casas historicizes Columbus and his men's impact stating that "Endless testimonies...prove the mild and pacific temperament of the natives... But our work was to exasperate, ravage, kill, mangle and destroy" (Zinn 6). Las Casas describes Columbus as a man "so anxious to please the King that he committed irreparable crimes against the Indians" (Zinn 6). In the history, Columbus's conceit leads him and his men to take full control of the Indians, Las Casas writing that they "rode the backs of Indians if they were in a hurry" or "had Indians carry large leaves to shade them from the sun and others to fan them with goose wings" (Zinn 6). Las Casas writes of the impact of Columbus's voyages, "there were 60,000 people living on this island, including the Indians; so that from 1494 to 1508, over three million people had perished from war, slavery, and the mines. Who in future generations will believe this? I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it" (Zinn 7). Despite Columbus's attempts at constructing for himself an attractive image, at the end of his life, he was seen as a disgraceful villain. It would be for nearly 300 years later that the legacy of Columbus would lay dormant, until the history of the voyages would be reborn, in the face of a new, hopeful nation.

After America adopted its Declaration of Independence in 1776, the people of the Thirteen Colonies needed a national identity with no ties to England. At the time, the obscure character Christopher Columbus had no relevance to American history, having never set foot on the lands of the present-day United States. In 1775 when a 14-year old freed slave girl named Phillis Wheatley wrote a poem in a letter to George Washington titled "His Excellency General Washington." The poem expressed how grand and glorious America was, and allegorically personified America as a goddess by the name of "Columbia," similar to, yet distinct from

Britain's personified figure Britannia. While Wheatley's poem wasn't the first recorded use of "Columbia", derived from Columbus, it's the poem's resonance with Washington that led to the wide distribution of poems and odes to Columbus, like "Columbia's Glory, or British Pride Humbled" and "The Great Republic" (Bushman 48). The national personification rooted in Columbus had spread like wildfire throughout the whole country evidenced in newspaper essays and odes to him.

In 1777, the publication of Scotsman William Robertson's history on the United States marked the time when Columbus the mere symbol became Columbus the man. In the history, Columbus is described as being unfairly treated by an Old World monarchy, and at the end of his life met with "the ingratitude of a monarch whom he had served with... fidelity and success, exhausted with the fatigues and hardships which he had endured" (Robertson 175). This piece of the narrative is something the American people could identify with, a parallel was drawn from Columbus's mistreatment by the Catholic Monarchs to the American colonies' mistreatment by Britain's monarchical government: King George was to King Ferdinand as Columbus was to the colonies.

Robertson's work relied heavily on Ferdinand's biography, but the rest was fabricated. In the history, Columbus demonstrates courage, humility, and perseverance in the face of adversity and in pursuit of his ideals to rise above the greed of the European monarchs.

The heroified image of Columbus became the embodiment of what Americans wanted to see in their young republic: courage and perseverance in the face of an abusive monarchy. The image of Columbus was used as a foundation off of which to build a national identity and as a

result, a number of eponyms like the capital of our country being named “the Territory of Columbia” and capitals of states like Ohio and South Carolina arose.

The camouflaging of Columbus set a precedent in American history that would overflow into the Antebellum Era, a time in which American society was becoming increasingly polarized and was searching for a unique identity. While the heroism of Columbus had been deeply ingrained in American culture since the Revolution, the Antebellum Era gave rise to the publication of Washington Irving’s *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, a work that served as the impetus in the continuation of the myth’s conveyance in history. During the Antebellum, American society was becoming deeply divided over the issue of slavery. America had split into the Confederacy (who defended the continuance of slavery) and the Union (who were in support of abolishment). The nation of America was at a time in which they needed something, *someone* to unite them, and fast.

At the same time, America was searching for a distinct identity. Seeking to cultivate for themselves an identity of their own, America contrasted themselves to other nations (as seen during the American Revolution with Britain) and viewed themselves from the broader perspective of how they fit into the rest of the world. The Antebellum was a time in which American society needed a uniting impetus and something that would distinguish them from European culture.

In 1828, Washington Irving published his hagiography *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, the extensively inaccurate book that purported itself to be a history and portrayed Columbus as a hero who left his comfortable life in Europe to find freedom from the shackles of a monarch-ruled world. While purporting Columbus’s motivation for embarking on

his voyages as to prove the Earth was round (in reality, it was to find a direct water route west from Europe to Asia), Irving painted a colorful picture of Columbus giving him the qualities of the cliché hero: courageous, persevering, and caring. In chapter forty-four of the work, labeled *Observations on the Character of Columbus*, Irving describes Columbus as a “man of great and inventive genius” whose ambition was “lofty and noble” (Irving 305-307).

By popularizing the myth that Columbus believed the earth was flat, Irving supplemented the corruption of the Columbus narrative that began during the American Revolution. In the work, Irving sought to paint a heroic and humane portrait to tell an entertaining story, not convey history, writing, “No sooner did [Columbus] land than he threw himself upon his knees, kissed the earth, and returned thanks to God with tears of joy” (Irving 73). The Columbus that was conveyed in this history solved both of Antebellum America’s problems by giving Americans a common hero to look up to and build a culture off of. Irving’s work became the inspiration for American artists around the nation who sought to portray parts of the legendary story of how Columbus discovered the Americas.

Around the quadricentennial of the voyages in 1892, Columbus again became the focus of American attention. At the Chicago World's Fair, also known as “the World’s Columbian Exposition,” America’s celebration of the Columbian voyages were intermixed with an endeavor to showcase their technological advancements of art, food, and entertainment. On the quadricentennial, President Benjamin Harrison’s proclamation inspired the first official Columbus Day celebration in which he “recommending to the people the observance in all their localities of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America...” and describing Columbus as “the pioneer of progress and enlightenment” (Harrison). Decades later in 1937, President



Franklin Delano Roosevelt designated October 12th a national holiday making Columbus today, one of the only two people celebrated in the US by name in a national holiday.

Between the quadricentennial and the quincentennial of Columbus' voyages, he became a figure of much ambivalence and controversy. In many cities, the adoption of Indigenous People's Day began as a counter-celebration of Columbus's voyages, a movement to put an end to the avid celebration of imperialism, colonialism, and genocide that Columbus' supposed 'contributions' to history truly represented. The holiday recognizes and celebrates Native Americans as the first inhabitants of the Americas and it's in this moment in history where the ambivalence can be boiled down to two discernible views of Columbus: the triumphant 'discovery' of the Americas, in which Columbus brought great material wealth to Europe and civilized a land of savagery, and the tragic destruction of the Americas, where Columbus instituted violent policies of slavery and exploited the agricultural value of the Americas, kidnapping and killing thousands while passing a number of diseases to the Indians -- all for the sake of wealth.

The first of these two disparate perspectives on Columbus is primarily evident today because of its roots in tradition. Ever since the American Revolution, the conservative viewpoint \emphasizes Columbus's importance and contribution to American history has given Columbus a platform of honor and great significance. This viewpoint, exemplified by books like *The Patriot's History* by Schweikart and Allen, doesn't necessarily say that Columbus was positively and merely positive, but takes into account the apparent negative aspects while still accrediting Columbus as an American hero. To exemplify the argument for the honoring of Columbus, Professor at Dartmouth College Jeffrey Hart states "Christopher Columbus was a genuine titan, a

hero of history and of the human spirit.... To denigrate Columbus is to denigrate what is worthy in human history and in us all” (Hart).

The second, ‘New Left perspective’ of Columbus, is one where the heroic thread is cut short and Columbus is yanked down from his position of honor is the critical viewpoint. In Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History*, Zinn acknowledges the significance of Columbus but emphasizes the negative implications that his actions and harsh policies of violence and exploitation had. Zinn claims that the Columbian voyages were not a “heroic adventure,” but the start of a “European invasion” and the beginning of a history of “conquest, slavery, and death” (Zinn 7).

In David Stannard’s *American Holocaust: the Conquest of the New World*, Stannard draws a parallel from the transatlantic voyages to one of the most horrific and cruel events in history: the Holocaust. According to Stannard, “Columbus himself set the example for subsequent Europeans, initiating a policy of genocide, of enslavement and killing that was to result in the near extermination of the first Americans” (Stannard).

From the beginning of the triumphant days of the Columbus myth to the end of them, there are two common variables that allowed both the initial and continual mythologization to occur: ignorance and convenient gratification. The two are in a way interdependent, in that because little was known about the explorer from Genoa, it was convenient for America to satisfy their desire to cultivate for themselves a new identity, distinguish themselves from the Old World and boast. While the case of how the image of Christopher Columbus has been camouflaged and warped is one that has a clear answer, the question of whether the image of Columbus in history has been conveyed isn’t merely a question of whether it’s been one of

triumph or one of tragedy, but instead a question of how groups of people throughout history have warped and camouflaged this story to fit their agendas at the time. While at first glance, the Columbian image throughout American history seems to be a static one, it's a thread that's been tugged at and knit from the birth of our independent nation to the 20th century, until it's cut short.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Primary

Bushman, Claudia L. *America Discovers Columbus: How An Italian Explorer Became An American Hero*. University Press of New England, 1992.

Churchill, Ward. *Indians Are Us?: Culture and Genocide in Native North America*. 11th ed., vol. 9, Common Courage Press, 1994.

This book was written by political activist, author, and former professor of ethnic studies at the University of Colorado focuses on the tragic viewpoint of Christopher Columbus' voyages and the footprint he's left behind in history. In the work, Churchill writes about the institutions of the policies of slavery (through *encomiando*) and the systemic genocide of the Taino population. Churchill's book writes with an emphasis on the perspective of the indigenous people rather than Columbus. Using approximate values and statistics, Churchill conveys the extremities of Columbus' actions on the indigenous population. This is classified as a primary source because it was written around the quincentennial of Columbus's voyages (c1992), an era that is focused on in my argument. Churchill's source is significant because it is an example of the surfacing of critical perspectives on Columbus during this time.

Columbus, Christopher. "Letter from Christopher Columbus." Received by King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella I, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, Gilder Lehrman Collection, Mar. 1493,

[https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/01427\\_fps.pdf](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/01427_fps.pdf).

This source is a letter written by Columbus to the Catholic Monarchs of Spain upon his arrival in Spain after his first voyage. This source is the earliest printed letter by Columbus, and was written by Columbus with the intent to inform the monarchs of "everything that has been done and discovered in this [first]voyage." This source is significant in elucidating not only what happened during the explorer's first voyage, but how he presented both himself and his findings to those back in Europe. This will help in my attempts to find the roots of the triumphant Columbian image, and whether it arose during his lifetime or not. This is also significant because it provides me with a starting point off of which to view how the Columbian image has been presented and warped from this point in history.

Columbus, Christopher. *The Journal of Christopher Columbus (During His First Voyage, 1492-93) and Documents Relating to the Voyages of John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real*. Translated by Clements R. Markham, The Hakluyt Society, 1893, [books.google.com/books?id=2mvK60VAdCcC&oe=UTF-8](https://books.google.com/books?id=2mvK60VAdCcC&oe=UTF-8).

This journal and logbook, meant to serve as a record of events and evidence for his sponsors, the Catholic Monarchs, is written by the explorer himself. This authentic, primary source provides insight into how Columbus conveyed his own actions and observations during this time. This source is significant because it's the earliest evidence for Columbus's voyages and what he saw and did. The journal brings us through Columbus's thought process during his first voyage to the Hispaniola and offers some key details into what happened circa 1492. This source is one of the few primary sources that give account to what happened during Christopher Columbus's voyages. It will prove to be an important source to take note of and analyze when looking at the big picture: what the premature image of Columbus is and how it transformed.

Hart, Jeffrey. "Discovering Columbus." *National Review*, 15 Oct. 1990, p. 56.

This magazine article is written by American cultural critic, essayist, columnist, and Professor Emeritus of English at Dartmouth College Jeffrey Hart. He writes in the article "to denigrate Columbus is to denigrate what is worthy in human history and in us all." This source, written around the quincentennial and therefore a primary source, is significant because it represents a conservative, yet modern approach on Columbus and his voyages. It will prove significant when contrasting the different viewpoints that manifest in today's ambivalence and controversy over the history of Columbus.

Irving, Washington. *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. London: John Murray, 1828, [archive.org/details/historyoflifeand02irviiala/page/n5](https://archive.org/details/historyoflifeand02irviiala/page/n5).

Volume two and three of this four-volume biography were written by American author, biographer, and historian Washington Irving. While this book is wholly inaccurate, it serves as a significant source in helping understand what influenced the thinking of many regarding the legacy of Christopher Columbus. This is inaccurate history, but still represents a perspective on the infamous explorer and is thus significant in analyzing how Columbus has been viewed throughout history. This will also serve as a significant source in elucidating why and how the Columbus myth prevailed throughout American history, and in particular during the Antebellum Era.

las Casas, Bartolome de. *History of the Indies*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

This primary source that describes nearly a decade of history of the Indies starting from Columbus's voyages in 1492 to 1502, is written by 16th-century Spanish historian Bartolome de las Casas. De Las Casas has been known as the first great historian of the

Americas and this source is based widely on eye-witness account. This source will prove to be significant in analyzing how it is that Columbus was viewed during his own time, giving me a starting point off of which to view the warping of his historical image.

Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. Simon & Schuster, 2007.

American sociologist, historian, and author James Loewen takes on the false historiography of some of the most popular figures in history in this book. In chapters one and two, in particular, Loewen delves into how figures in history are often glorified, humanized, and purported as heroes without conflicts and human interests to make the story of that individual's life more dramatic or "interesting." In doing this, Loewen busts some myths about Columbus and brings to light (with substantial evidence) a different, negative view on who the real Columbus was and what his contributions and impact on history were. This source also serves as a primary source in that it was originally published in 1995, around the quincentennial of Columbus voyages, and is an example of the critical perspectives of Columbus that arose circa that time.

Phillips, William D., and Carla Rahn Phillips. *The Worlds of Christopher Columbus*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

This book written by former professors of European history at the University of Minnesota, William and Carla Phillips examines the course of Columbus's voyages and the context and effect of them. The book puts into perspective how pivotal Columbus's voyages were and delves into both the negative and positive implications of his actions. This source will prove useful in analyzing how Columbus was viewed by the historical sphere around the quincentenary of Columbus's voyages and how the image of him varied.

Robertson, William. *The History of America*. vol. 1 3, Messrs. Whitestone, 1777, [books.google.com/books?id=Ooo9AAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=Ooo9AAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false).

This source is a detailed history of America written by Scottish historian and minister William Robertson. In the history, Robertson takes a eurocentric tone to falsely purport Columbus as a hero with noble intentions while on his voyages to the New World. This source is significant because it is what shaped the triumphant, hero narrative of Columbus that began its manifestation in American culture during the Revolution. This source, greatly based on fabrications, served as the historical impetus in the mythologization of Columbus and has its publication has implications that we still see today regarding the image of Columbus. It serves as a primary source in that it was written during an era that's understudy for my argument: the Antebellum.

Stannard, David E. *American Holocaust: the Conquest of the New World*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Historian and professor of American Studies at the University of Hawaii David Edward Stannard writes in his book about what he calls ‘the American Holocaust.’ In the book, Stannard conveys the tragic oppression and genocide of the indigenous Americans as the largest in history and delves deeply on both the deliberate and unintentional trouble that the Europeans brought when they arrived in the New World. From the epidemics to the enslavement, rape, and murder, Stannard’s work reveals a facet to the abstract ways Columbus has been viewed throughout history. Originally published in 1992, this is a primary source because it is an example of the critical perspectives on Columbus that arose around the quincentennial of the voyages.

“The City on the Hill, 1492-1707.” *A Patriot's History of the United States: from Columbus's Great Discovery to the War on Terror*, by Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, Sentinel, 2007, pp. 1–37.

This book on American history written by Larry Schweikart professor of history at the University of Dayton and Michael Allen, professor of history at the University of Washington, Tacoma was written in response to Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History*. This book offers a much more conservative viewpoint on the voyages of Columbus and while it takes into account the negative aspects of early America, it does not condemn Columbus as a villain nor his actions as tragic, but a great discovery. This source will be significant in the development of my argument in that it will help me offer both perspectives of Columbus that arose after the quincentennial.

Turner, L. “The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by His Son Ferdinand by Benjamin Keen”. *Indiana Magazine of History*, Dec. 1959, <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/7918>.

This primary source, written by Columbus’s son Ferdinand and translated by Latin-America specialized historian Dr. Benjamin Keen, offers a unique perspective on the voyages of Christopher Columbus. In the biography of his father, Ferdinand positively views his father and offers some rich quality details on Columbus and his men’s actions. Ferdinand’s biography reflects some of the general perceptions and violent actions towards the indigenous people. While doing this, the source also provides some insight to the reader as to what Columbus and his men’s thought process and motives were when arriving on the coast of Guanaja. I derived from the source the triumphant layer of the tragedy-wrapped-in-triumph idea and this stirred some curiosity in me to get to the deeper tragedy perspective.

Wheatley, Phillis. "His Excellency General Washington." Poets.org, Academy of American Poets, 10 Mar. 2016, [www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/his-excellency-general-washington](http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/his-excellency-general-washington). This poem, written by a 14-year old freed slave Phillis Wheatley, was written to General George Washington in 1775. This poem expresses the beauty and grandness of America while substituting the name of the country for "Columbia" to allegorically represent the nation as a woman. At the time it was written, in 1775, America was fighting for independence from England, and Columbia is derived from Columbus. This is significant because it led to the use of the image of Columbus to give America an identity not rooted in England, and would prove to be the first of many times throughout American history that Columbus is related to and utilized by America. This helps my argument in elucidating why it is that Columbus, a man who didn't land in the North American area, is so prominent in the culture and history of the nation today.

Zinn, Howard. "Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress." *A People's History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn, Harper, 2017.

In the late American historian and social activist Howard Zinn's first chapter of his book, he not only contrasts the hospitality that the indigenous people show the Europeans with the hostility shown by the settlers towards the Indians, but highlights the cruel motives of Christopher Columbus from the get-go of his arrival on the New World, while backing it up using quotes from Columbus's personal journal. This source will be beneficial in bringing depth to the multifaceted perception of Columbus throughout history. This is a more recent, critical view of Christopher Columbus.

Benjamin Harrison's quadricentennial proclamation

## **Secondary**

Abrams, Ann Uhry. "VISIONS OF COLUMBUS: The 'Discovery' Legend in Antebellum American Paintings and Prints." *The American Art Journal*, vol. 25, no. 1/2, 1993. This article written by journalist Ann Uhry Abrams delves into the art that arose of Christopher Columbus during the Antebellum Era. For the most part, the art in this article is described in relation to how it arose as inspiration from Washington Irving's *Life and Voyages*. This source was significant in identifying how exactly the Englishman's work helped continue the conveyance of the Columbian heroic myth and how it was manifested.

Burmila, Edward. "The Invention of Christopher Columbus, American Hero." *The Nation*, 13 Oct. 2017, [www.thenation.com/article/the-invention-of-christopher-columbus-american-hero/](http://www.thenation.com/article/the-invention-of-christopher-columbus-american-hero/).



Assistant professor of political science at Bradley University Edward Burmila explains succinctly in his article about the creation and manifestation of the Christopher Columbus-hero myth in US history. Understanding the historically inaccurate, yet captivating depiction of Columbus is important in understanding why Columbus is viewed by many the way he is in history. Burmila provides a historically accurate, and sensible explanation for the question I had been asking in my head of “if Columbus did all these bad things, and didn’t even touch the land of modern day United States of America, why do we celebrate him?” This article will give my argument a unique depth that outlines the path of how a tragic, generally unsuccessful event, over time, gets warped into a triumphant, widely-known event.

Coleman, Arica L. “Indigenous Peoples Day and Why Columbus Day Is Controversial.” *Time*, Time, 6 Oct. 2017, [time.com/4971178/indigenous-peoples-day-history-columbus-day/](https://time.com/4971178/indigenous-peoples-day-history-columbus-day/). This TIME article was written by award-winning, nationally-renowned historian Dr. Arica L. Coleman whose research focuses include comparative ethnic studies, issues of racial formation, indigeneity, immigration and migration, and interracial relations. She is also the chair of the ALANA Committee for the Organization of American Historians which focuses on the status of African American, Latinx American, Native American and Asian American histories. This article delves into the history surrounding the ambivalence and controversy regarding Columbus Day and the origins of the movement to replace it with “Indigenous People’s Day.” This will be useful in analyzing what the mythologization of the Columbus story’s significance to today is.

Flint, Valerie I.J. “Christopher Columbus.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Dec. 2018, [www.britannica.com/biography/Christopher-Columbus](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Christopher-Columbus). This is an article written by G.F. Grant Professor of History at the University of Hull and published by Encyclopedia Britannica. In the article, Flint concisely states the historical facts surrounding Columbus’s birth, life, and work. She then spends most of the article delves into when and why the historical Columbus became controversial and the shift that occurred in approach and interpretation of Columbus’s role in history. This is significant because it helped me narrow my focus to where in history the ambivalence and controversy over the subject of Columbus began.