

## *Columbus and the "Discovery" of the "New World"*

### **The depiction of Christopher Columbus in popular history magazines**

The perspective of English textbooks on the topic "Columbus and the 'Discovery' of the 'New World'"

Until the introduction of the first National Curriculum for history in 1991, Columbus was a common topic in UK text books. It was commonly treated under the title of 'The voyages of discovery', with the three main explorers who were covered in text books being Christopher Columbus, Ferdinand Magellan and Francis Drake. The voyages were treated mainly as voyages of discovery or scientific curiosity rather than 'voyages of exploitation'.

However, after the introduction of the compulsory National Curriculum for history in 1991, there was much more emphasis on national history; one Secretary of State argued that at least 80% of the curriculum should be about British history, and textbooks tended to reflect this. So attention focused much more on the development of the British Empire, and very few textbooks mentioned the voyages of Columbus and Magellan; the emphasis in text books was on British explorers (Drake, Cook) and Britain's relations with Canada, America, India, Australia and Britain's African colonies. Columbus became something of a 'black hole' in terms of British History textbooks, and that remains the case until the present day. Columbus is not mentioned in the new National Curriculum to be introduced in schools in September 2014, and so he is unlikely to feature in British text books in the future.

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