

Columbus "discovering" a new world

An analysis of Columbus in Swedish popular history

How is Columbus depicted in popular historical magazines? Texts from two Swedish magazines are available to illustrate how differently Columbus can be described and how his story is made interesting by using different kinds of popularization. The article from the magazine "History of the World" labeled "[Columbus colony was a disaster](#)" written by Stine Overbye (2012) is meant to be read closely, while the 2009 article called "[the mystery of Columbus](#)" by Niels Peter Granzow Busch is primarily supposed to be analyzed more in terms of layout.

Columbus is often presented as a historical character in European popular historical magazines. In England, Germany, Spain, and Poland he is depicted in various ways. In the Swedish article "Columbus colony was a disaster" Columbus' life and deeds are problematized in a way that fits well into teaching practices. This article can be used when teaching and the questions below are designed to problematize the role of Columbus, and stimulate critical thinking and multiperspectivity.

Questions

Your image of Columbus?

- 1 a. What image did you have of Columbus before reading the article? (for instance hero, discoverer or colonizer?)
b. Discuss the question with your classmate and reflect upon where you have gotten your image of Columbus from (for instance school, movies or books).
- 2 **How did the inhabitants greet Columbus on his arrival to the island the Spanish called Hispaniola?**
- 3 **How do you think the inhabitants experienced the Spaniards' arrival?**
- 4 **How do you think the inhabitants experienced Columbus as a leader?**

- 5 **How do you think the Spanish settlers perceived Columbus as a leader?**
- 6 **What caused the conflicts between the "Indians" and Spaniards?**
- 7 **How did the Spanish perceive the "Indians" and how did the "Indians" perceive the Spanish?**
- 8 **Is it appropriate to denote the inhabitants of the island as Indians? Can you find other more appropriate ways to name the inhabitants? (justify your answer)**
- 9 **What reasons can you find to consider Columbus a historical hero and what points towards the opposite?**
- 10 **If you were Columbus how would you have acted?**
- 11 **What would you do in the Indians' situation?**
- 12 **How would you experience the situation of an ordinary Spanish settler?**
- 13 **Look at the headings, images and captions in the Swedish article "the Mystery of Columbus". In what way are they trying to awaken interest in Columbus in that article in comparison to the other Swedish article?**

In what way are they trying to awaken interest in Columbus in that article in comparison to the other Swedish article?

Look at the front pages of the magazines containing articles about Columbus: the history of the world: history's greatest dramas in focus number [16 2012](#) and number [4 2009](#).

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- In what way is history presented in order to spark interest?
 - What stories from the past do they represent?
 - Can you from the front-pages make out the theoretical positions (bias) of the papers?

