

## **Columbus Study questions: general**

Article: David Armitage, Christopher Columbus and the Uses of History  
History Today, (May 1992)

This is quite a long and dense article, which is mainly suitable for advanced level students (age 16-18). Although the text is a difficult one, it is good to sometimes work with longer and more challenging texts (especially for those students who may be thinking about going on to study history at university). The article is also useful in that it helps to explain how and why views about people and events in history sometimes differ, and change over time.

Because the text is a substantial and difficult one, students should work in groups of 3 or 4 and share their ideas and understandings of the text in relation to the following questions, before preparing to present their answers. Groups may also wish to 'sub-contract' sections of the article, in order to work through the text more quickly.

### **General questions about the article**

1. On page 50 (column 2), Armitage states that the five hundred year anniversary of Columbus's journey to America in 1492 was celebrated in Italy, Spain and the USA. What connection does Columbus have with these three countries?
2. (See page 50, bottom of column 2 and top 11 lines of column 3) Why have some people seen Columbus's voyage to America as a bad thing, which should not be celebrated?
3. (See page 51, top half of column 1): Armitage gives us his own view, as a historian, of how Columbus himself saw his role in history – what is Armitage's interpretation of Columbus's self-perception?
4. It is a long article, and there is a lot of detail in it about various views about Columbus over the past five centuries. But what is the main purpose of Armitage's

article? What is the key point he is trying to make? Try to sum this up in no more than 50 words. (This is very difficult, but the ability to précis information is an important skill in history).