



Early American Civilizations and Explorers

As waves of explorers and settlers crossed from Europe to the Americas, the native populations were treated in vastly different ways. For the Spanish, natives were a source of converts to the Church. For the English and French, they were a mixed package of allies and ferocious enemies. Old-world contact in the New World completely changed the lives of the natives, bringing with it new concepts, new diseases, and new obstacles to be overcome.

Using your chosen explorer, brainstorm different motivating factors that may have prompted early explorers to go to the Americas. Research your Early American Explorer or Civilization Ruler/Leader using multiple resources (Internet, library books, articles, etc.). Choose one of the following to “teach” the class about your person (such as their historical figure profile: where they are from, what they did, who commissioned them, if applicable, and beliefs/reason for travel). Make sure to stress the westward expansion and how each new dilemma played a part in shaping the Americas we see today in culture, language, and government.

Discuss the pros and cons of these explorations in terms of the greatly expanded knowledge about the Americas versus the negative effects on the cultures and landscapes that were discovered. Discuss issues such as the effects of cultural differences and misunderstandings, the introductions of new animals, plants, tools, weapons, and disease to the indigenous cultures, and the discovery of precious resources.

Choose **ONE** of the following to illustrate your knowledge about your Early American Explorer or Civilization Ruler/Leader:

1. Create a catchy song/poem/PowerPoint with music for your presentation. Please get very creative. Suggestions: Use a tune from a TV theme song.
2. Write a week’s worth of personal journal entries about your explorer’s experiences and motivations. Please include a map showing your explorer’s routes.
3. Create a video of a mock interview of your explorer (You may either play both parts or write a script and “hire” another individual to aid you!) Pretend you’re a talk show host and discuss your explorer’s experiences and motivations. Include props your explorer can “show” during a taped interview. The interview should be recorded on a CD or flash drive.
4. Create a board game that illustrates the cultures, landscapes, animals, plants, tools, weapons, and diseases your explorer encountered during his travels to the Americas. Make sure to include motivating factors, beliefs, concepts, and obstacles relevant to your explorer.
5. Create an art gallery that illustrates a collection of motivating factors, beliefs, concepts, and obstacles relevant to your explorer. Please include a variety and a minimum of five “pieces” of artwork (paintings, drawings, pottery, etc.).

Early American Civilizations and Explorers Rubric

Criteria: 5 th Grade CATS	4 Outstanding!	3 Good Work!	2 Could do Better	1 Need to Improve	Total Points Earned
Completeness	Project demonstrates thorough and reflective responses. All portions of project complete.	Project demonstrates clear and reflective responses. All portions of project complete.	Project demonstrates some reflective responses. Some portions of project complete.	Does not complete the project and/or does not meet the project's requirements.	
Understanding of Content	Project demonstrates a strong understanding of course concepts.	Project demonstrates a clear understanding of course concepts.	Project demonstrates some (limited) understanding of course concepts.	Project demonstrates little or no understanding of course concepts.	
Critical Thinking	Project demonstrates definite and appropriate use of research, etc. of all course concepts.	Project demonstrates a clear use of research, etc. of course concepts.	Project demonstrates little evidence of the use of research, etc. in regard to course concepts.	Project demonstrates little or no evidence of the use of research, etc. in regard to course concepts.	
Spelling and Grammar	Entries demonstrate a total of 0-2 errors.	Entries demonstrate a total of 3-5 errors.	Entries demonstrate greater than 5 errors.	Entries, as an entirety, do not reflect the utilization of 6 th grade language and writing standards.	
Student Name: _____				Total Score: _____ / 16 pts.	