



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1992 Volume II: Writing and Re-writings of the Discovery and Conquest of America

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## The Indians' Discovery of Columbus

Guide for Curriculum Unit 92.02.01  
by Christine Elmore

What was viewed by the Europeans as an exciting discovery of new territory was, from the view-point of the native inhabitants of these lands, a tragic invasion. This unit presents the conquest of Mexico and the downfall of the Aztec empire from the perspective of the Aztec "Indians" themselves. It is by examining events from the vantage-point of the conquered people that we gain real insight into the tremendous culture-clash that occurred in the "New World."

My curriculum unit, which has been designed as the feature-component of a third-grade Social Studies program, covers a four-to-eight-week period, and will incorporate map, critical reading, creative writing, and role-playing skills.

The unit is divided into four sections. Part one looks at fifteenth-century Europe and the factors influencing men like Columbus to venture into the New World. The second section is a study of Hernando Cortes and his times, from which a representative portrait of the conquistador will emerge. The third part examines the conquest of Mexico from the Aztecs' point of view. The fourth section examines the tragic clash of cultures that ensued between the "Indians" and the Europeans, focusing on Aztec religious culture to demonstrate this contrast.

(Recommended for Social Studies, grades 2-5)

### **Key Words**

*Columbus Christopher Multicultural Education Ethnicity Geography American Aztecs History Native American*

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