## (6-7) Christopher Columbus: Excerpts from his 1492 Journal

## Source: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus1.html

**Questions to Consider**

1. How are the natives of Hispaniola greeting Columbus?

2. What are the Spanish erecting as soon as they arrive?

3. What does Columbus want to do with the people of the Americas?

4. What does Columbus hope to acquire from the native people?

5. In your opinion, is it correct to say Columbus discovered America if people already lived there? Explain.

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| A group of men in historical clothing  Description automatically generated |

An engraving by Theodore de Bry (1592) showing Christopher Columbus landing on the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola in December 1492.

A. As I saw that they were very friendly to us, and perceived that they could be much more easily converted to our holy faith by gentle means than by force, I presented them with some red caps, and strings of beads to wear upon the neck, and many other trifles of small value. . . Afterwards they came swimming to the boats, bringing parrots, balls of cotton thread, javelins, and many other things which they exchanged for articles we gave them, such as glass beads, and hawk’s bells.

B. They seemed on the whole to me, to be a very poor people. They all go completely naked, even the women, though I saw but one girl. All whom I saw were young, not above thirty years of age, well made, with fine shapes and faces . . . Some paint the face, and some the whole body; others only the eyes, and others the nose.

C. Weapons they have none, nor are acquainted with them, for I showed them swords which they grasped by the blades, and cut themselves through ignorance. . . It appears to me, that the people are ingenious, and would be good servants . . . I am of opinion that they would very readily become Christians, as they appear to have no religion . . . I intend . . . to carry home six of them to your Highnesses, that they may learn our language.

D. I . . . strove to learn if they had any gold. Seeing some of them with little bits of this metal hanging at their noses, I gathered from them by signs that by going southward or steering round the island in that direction, there would be found a king who possessed large vessels of gold.

E. We anchored near the cape . . . to enquire for gold, for the natives we had taken from San Salvador told me that the people here wore golden bracelets upon their arms and legs. I believed . . . that they had invented this story . . . to find means to escape from us, still I determined to pass none of these islands without taking possession, because being once taken, it would answer for all times.