



Subject: Social Studies

Grade Level: Elementary School

DI Strategy: Expert Partner Jigsaw

### Explorers Expert Partner Jigsaw Lesson

Our social studies curriculum asks us to introduce students to ten explorers of the new world. The text we use (which is old) is probably written on a 6th or 7th grade reading level. Fortunately, our library has a number of reproducible resources which I used with certain students during this unit.

I began the unit by discussing the essential questions:

- 1) What were the political, economic, and cultural causes of European exploration?
- 2) What were the major sea routes and exploits of each explorer?
- 3) Why is the legacy of Columbus so controversial?
- 4) What were the political, economic and cultural effects of European exploration?

The following jigsaw activity allowed me to use Columbus as a guide for how I expected them to answer the essential questions for the other explorers we were going to investigate.

I had students in my room work in heterogeneous teams of 4. Each team split into groups of 2 and each partnership received a different reading. The first reading was from the text and had a fairly positive take on Columbus. I assigned the best readers (2) in each group to read that section and then complete a Plus, Minus, and Interesting organizer as they read. Each student read independently and made notes. Then they discussed their notes with their partner. They were required to point to the text to identify where they found their information. I circulated around the room, looking at each finished product with a critical eye, often referring groups to look back at a section or two.

At the same time the other two students in the pod of four were using the same process with materials from the library. Their reading was newer and more balanced in the presentation of Columbus. These students also produced a Plus, Minus, and Interesting organizer, which I reviewed closely. It was interesting, probably due to previous learning about Columbus, students often were reticent to record the challenging/contrary points of view presented in the reading. If they had not, I pointed them to those sections, and assured them this was critical material if we were going to answer our essential questions.

I used an Anchor during this work, as groups finished at different rates. For the Anchor, students selected/were assigned (I did assign some based on degree of reading difficulty) an explorer to investigate and answer the essential questions for that explorer. This time got them off to a good start on that research.

I had the groups read and complete the organizer on day 1. On day 2, the groups shared their work, each team was to record 4-7 items from the other team's research. After sharing, students used their completed organizer to take a first crack at answering the essential question: Why is



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the legacy of Columbus so controversial? On the third day we discussed the question first in mixed 4's (I mixed the pods), and then as a class. After the discussion students edited and completed their responses.