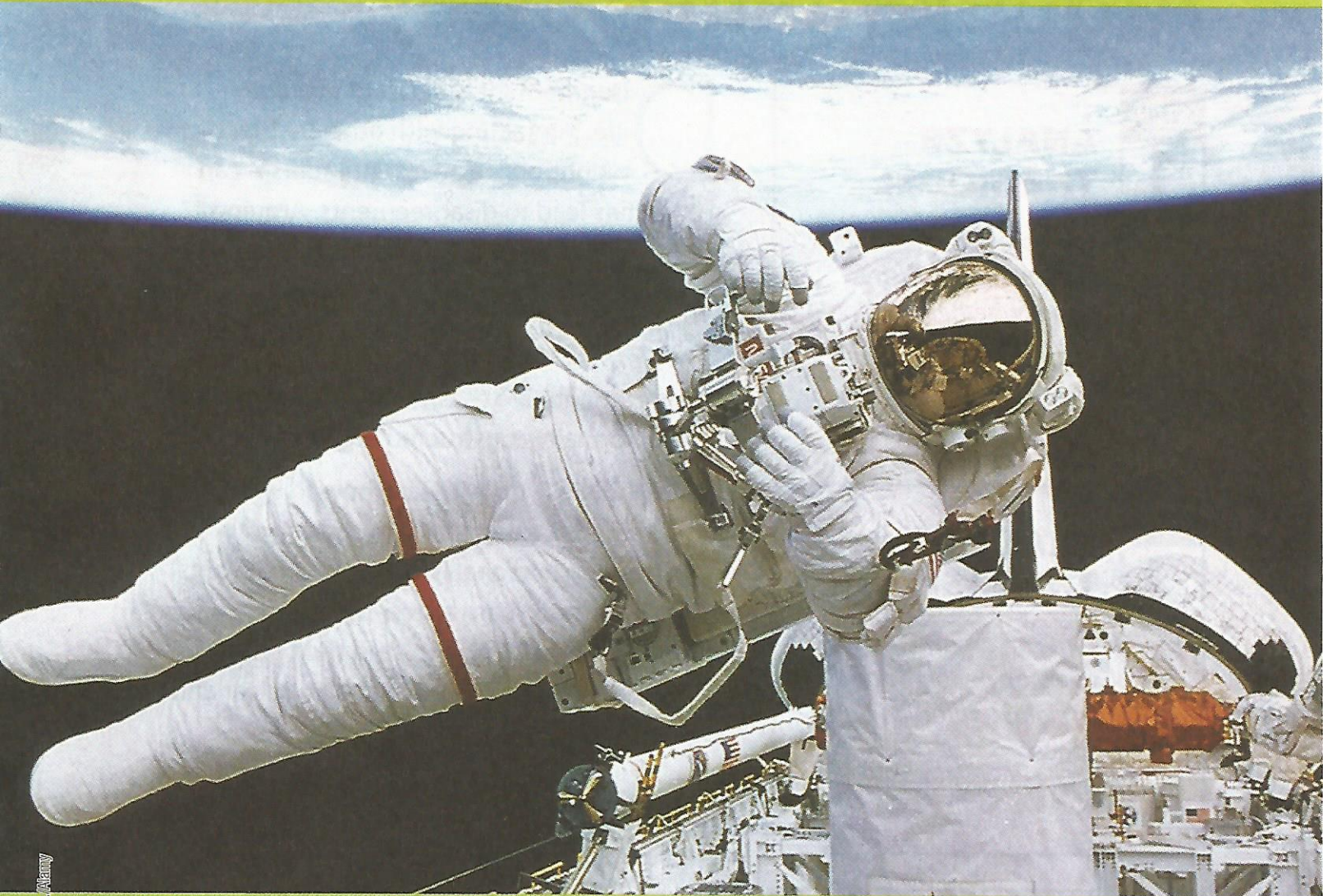


UNIT 1: Argumentative Essay



Investigating the Unknown

UNIT 1

Argumentative Essay

STEP

1

ANALYZE THE MODEL

Evaluate an argumentative essay about whether we should celebrate Columbus Day.

STEP

2

PRACTICE THE TASK

Write an argumentative essay on people's right to claim territory in outer space.

STEP

3

PERFORM THE TASK

Write an argumentative essay for or against the rescue of individuals who put themselves at risk.

Disagreement is a part of everyday life. Interacting with others—friends, neighbors, relatives, strangers—can sometimes lead to disagreements. Arguing, giving your reasons for your stance on an issue, and explaining your point of view, can be challenging on a person-to-person level.

The argumentative essay, on the other hand, is a more formally constructed argument.

IN THIS UNIT you will learn how to write an argumentative essay that is based on your close reading and analysis of several relevant sources. You will learn a step-by-step approach to stating a precise claim—and then organize your essay to support your claim in a clear and logical way.

ANALYZE THE MODEL

Should we celebrate Columbus Day?



You will read:

▶ **TWO NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS**

The Columbus Day Dilemma: To Celebrate or Not to Celebrate?

Let's Celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day

You will analyze:

▶ **A STUDENT MODEL**

The Start of Something New

Source Materials for Step 1

The newspaper editorials on these two pages were used by Mr. George's student, Alison Rodriguez, as sources for her essay, "The Start of Something New." As you read, make notes in the side columns and underline information that you find useful.

NOTES

The Columbus Day Dilemma: TO CELEBRATE OR NOT TO CELEBRATE?

from The Holiday Blogger!

Columbus Day has to be one of our most controversial holidays. To some people, it's a way to celebrate the daring achievements of the explorer who "discovered" America. They say Columbus was the founder of the first permanent European settlement in the New World and that his arrival marked the start of recorded history in America. Plus, it's a day to celebrate the heritage of 26 million Italian Americans—the nation's fifth largest ethnic group. Fantastic! Let's party!

But wait—it seems not everyone agrees even on that much. First of all, many believe that Vikings started a colony on Newfoundland, Canada, hundreds of years before Columbus arrived in the Caribbean. Secondly, there was certainly writing in the Americas before Columbus arrived (Mayan hieroglyphics, for example), just not writing that Columbus could read! And of course, the very idea that someone could "discover" a well-inhabited continent is kind of crazy. As for celebrating Italian Americans—why doesn't every ethnic group have a federal holiday?

Perhaps we should agree to disagree and let each person decide if he or she is going to celebrate this controversial holiday or not. Meanwhile, let's look out for another day that represents something we can all get behind!

Let's Celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day

The San Francisco Bugle

Columbus Day—a federal holiday since 1937—commemorates the famous explorer's arrival in the New World way back in 1492.

The problem is, not everyone wants to celebrate the man who opened the Americas to European colonization. Just think about all the misery that followed: land grabbing, enslavement, disease, death, and the near extinction of native peoples. One spokesman for Native Americans in the U.S. summed it up this way: "Columbus doesn't deserve parades and holidays; this should be a national day of mourning." Continuing to celebrate Columbus Day is so insensitive, it's embarrassing.

Perhaps there is a way to take this lemon of a holiday and make lemonade by turning it on its head. Why not celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day instead? Instead of a day commemorating one explorer—or a day of private mourning and sadness for those who were killed—we could have a day of tribute and celebration for the survivors and the culture that they continue to uphold and strengthen into the current day. The second Monday of October could be a day to learn about the Native Americans who were here when Europeans first arrived—and discover and salute the vibrant and developing cultures of all of today's indigenous peoples. Now that's worth celebrating!

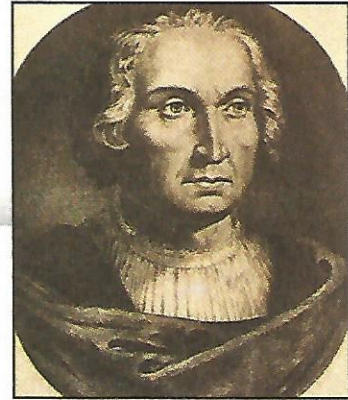
NOTES

Discuss and Decide

You've read two sources about celebrating Columbus Day. Without going any further, discuss the question: Should we celebrate Columbus Day?

Analyze a Student Model for Step 1

Read Alison's argumentative essay closely. The red side notes are the comments that her teacher, Mr. George, wrote.



Christopher Columbus

Alison Rodriguez
Mr. George
English 7
September 29

The Start of Something New

Don't be shocked, but Columbus didn't discover America! How we look at Columbus Day has changed over the years. In 1492, a man who never realized that he had not found a route to India changed the future of our world forever. His voyage began the recognition of the Americas by Europe. That is something worth celebrating.

Because of Columbus, other Europeans started coming to the New World. The Spanish conquistadors came searching for gold. They brought with them their Christian faith and their language. Would Latin America be Latin, if it wasn't for Columbus?

Later, settlers came for a better life and greater freedom, a fresh start in a new place. Jamestown, Plymouth Rock, and even New York were settled because of the interest sparked by Columbus' travels. The people who came brought their hopes, dreams, skills, and knowledge. They established colonies, which became villages, which grew into towns and cities. New York might be a different place today if Columbus had never sailed.

That Columbus Day is a school holiday is another reason for celebration. We really have too many school days, and a nice three-day weekend in October is really appreciated. Since we don't get a day off for Halloween, Columbus Day is a fair trade.

Interesting hook.

The issue and your claim are clear.

Valid reason that supports your claim with evidence.

Good transition.

You make an excellent point!

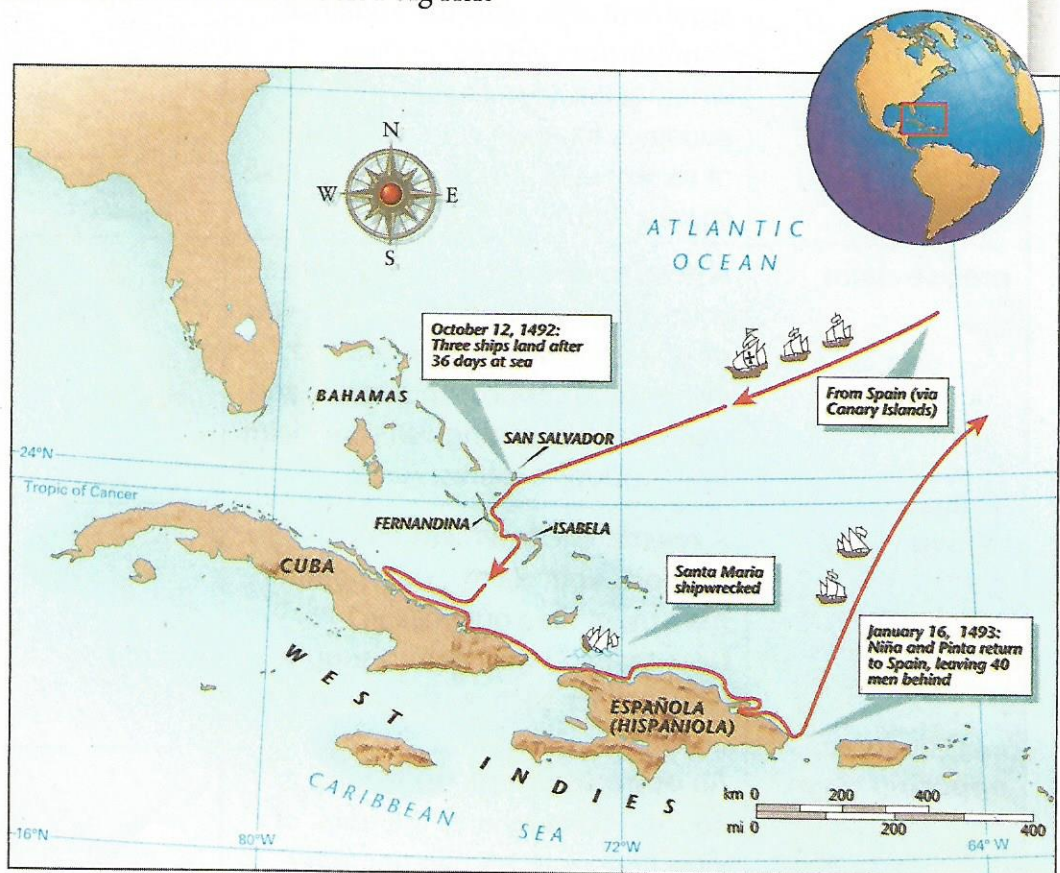
Alison, I'm not sure that Halloween warrants a day off!

Columbus Day is controversial, besides the fact that Columbus didn't discover America. Many different tribes of indigenous people lived in the Americas before 1492. Columbus enslaved the Taíno people he found living on the islands when he landed. We should be sensitive to the feelings of Native Americans, who were mistreated by white men for many years beginning with Columbus. But that doesn't mean we can't honor Columbus and other Italian Americans who made important contributions to our country and deserve to be recognized.

On Columbus Day we should consider our past and the debt we owe to adventurers. Columbus took a big risk sailing to places unknown. He had no way of knowing how his voyage would affect the world. We should recognize and celebrate Columbus Day.

You identified an opposing claim and responded with logical evidence.

Convincing evidence and smooth flow from beginning to end.



The map above shows a portion of the route Christopher Columbus took on his first voyage in 1492. He found the Taíno people living on the group of islands known today as the Bahamas.

Discuss and Decide

Did Alison's essay convince you that Columbus Day should be celebrated? If so, cite the most compelling text evidence in her essay.

Terminology of Argumentative Texts

Read each word and explanation. Then look back at Alison Rodriguez's argumentative essay and find an example to complete the chart.

Term	Explanation	Example from Alison's Essay
audience	The audience for your argument is a group of people that you want to convince. As you develop your argument, consider your audience's knowledge level and concerns.	
purpose	The purpose for writing an argument is to sway the audience. Your purpose should be clear, whether it is to persuade your audience to agree with your claim, or to motivate your audience to take some action.	
precise claim	A precise claim confidently states your viewpoint. Remember that you must be able to find reasons and evidence to support your claim, and that you must distinguish your claim from opposing claims.	
reason	A reason is a statement that supports your claim. (You should have more than one reason.) Note that you will need to supply evidence for each reason you state.	
opposing claim	An opposing claim or counterclaim , shares the point of view of people who do not agree with your claim. Opposing claims must be fairly presented with evidence.	