

AP Language Essay: Columbus Day



Prompt

In recent years, the idea of celebrating Columbus Day has become increasingly controversial in the United States, with critics arguing that the holiday improperly celebrates a flawed man and denigrates American Indians, while supporters argue it is an important celebration of American heritage.

American Indian activist Ward Churchill argues that the holiday must be abandoned, writing:

“Very high on the list of those expressions of non-indigenous sensibility [that] contribute to the perpetuation of genocidal policies against [American] Indians are the annual Columbus Day celebration, events in which it is baldly asserted that the process, events, and circumstances described above are, at best, either acceptable or unimportant. More often, the sentiments expressed by the participants are, quite frankly, that the fate of Native America embodied in Columbus and the Columbian legacy is a matter to be openly and enthusiastically applauded as an unrivaled “boon to all mankind”. Undeniably, the situation of American Indians will not — in fact cannot — change for the better so long as such attitudes are deemed socially acceptable by the mainstream populace. Hence, such celebrations as Columbus Day must be stopped.”

On the other hand, Ronald Reagan wrote approvingly of the holiday, writing,

It’s on this day we revisit the enduring lessons of his courage and leadership. Columbus, of course, has always held a proud place in our history not only for his voyage of exploration but for the spirit that he exemplified. He was a dreamer, a man of vision and courage, a man filled with hope for the future and with the determination to cast off for the unknown and sail into uncharted seas for the joy of finding whatever was there. Put it all together and you might say that Columbus was the inventor of the American dream.

In a well-developed essay, defend, refute, or qualify the claim that the United States should abandon Columbus Day.

Requirements

- Please submit a typed response that uses a legible 10-point font, 1” margins, a double spaced body, and a simple single spaced header that includes your name, class period, and date.
- Your response should include both an introduction and conclusion, both of which should be short and direct.
- Your paper should be a minimum of 800 words and not rely on the use of outside research.

Tips

- For this essay, remember some of the specific tips we’ve discussed all year: developing a clear, argumentative thesis, weaving in examples rather than overdeveloping one or under-developing others, and engaging the reader with a STAMPY introduction.
- Your essay should include at least one naysayer, a deliberate structure for paragraphs, concrete details and metaphorical language.