



GREAT AMERICAN CONFRONTATIONS

Brief, Interactive Historical Dramatizations

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About the Authors

BILL LACEY has been writing for Interact since 1974. He has written well over fifty simulations or units, including ones he considers his favorites: Civil War (coauthor), Patriots (coauthor), Bones & Stones (coauthor), Greeks, Vietnam, Fifties, Vikings, and Alamo (coauthor). After graduating from the University of Southern California with a Master's degree in history, Bill taught U.S. history for more than thirty-five years in California and one year (1970-71) in London, England. Since his retirement from full-time teaching, he has supervised student teachers for the California State University system, played lots of golf, and he continues to enjoy hanging out with his family, including his eight grandchildren.

JOHN BOVBERG has written several episodes in the Great American Confrontation series. He and his team-teaching partner, Bill Lacey, conceived the series and together coauthored the prototype, *Who Really Discovered America?* John also teamed with Bill to originate the Great American Lives project, authoring Ben Franklin and coauthoring Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. Professionally, John taught U.S. History, supervised the student teacher program, and sponsored junior-senior class activities at Fountain Valley High School in Fountain Valley, California. He was a California mentor teacher and frequent presenter at social studies workshops.

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Teacher Feedback Form

Release Form for Photographic Images

OVERVIEW

... the cast of characters ...

In this activity several of your students role play explorers over many centuries, individuals who claim to be the real, genuine discoverer of America. They present evidence and answer questions as they strive to convince the audience of the accuracy of their claims. A master of ceremonies keeps the presentation going by following a script. As the presentation takes place, all students—including each explorer—take notes on their STUDIO AUDIENCE FORM.

Six “discoverers” and one optional character

- **Hoei-Shin** A Buddhist monk from China, Hoei-Shin claims he touched upon the shores of California, Mexico, and South America circa 495.
- **Brendan the Bold** An Irish priest, Brendan the Bold sailed across the Atlantic in a small curragh made of animal skins circa 550.
- **Prince Madoc** A disinherited son of a Welch king, Prince Madoc claims that he came to America in the 12th century and sailed up the Mississippi River into the American hinterland where his men intermarried with the native Indians.
- **Bjarni Herjulfsson** The first of two Norse claimants, Herjulfsson gazed upon but did not actually step on North America proper in 986. His exploits, however, led to subsequent Viking voyages over the next 100 years or so.
- **Leif Ericsson** A sagacious Viking adventurer, Ericsson has many supporters who say he colonized America about 1000, stayed a season or two, then left in his wake solid historical evidence substantiating his claim.
- **Christopher Columbus** As every history student knows, Columbus, a Genoese admiral, sailed under Spanish flags in ships bound for the East Indies only to “bump” into America in 1492.
- **Chief Howling Wind** (*optional*) A Cree Indian, Chief Howling Wind is the one panelist who criticizes the academic hairsplitting and points out that everyone was second to the Native Americans.

HOEI-SHIN - 2

- These giant Chinese junks carried large stone anchors which had holes chiseled into them. Two of these anchors were found in the 1970s along the California coast—one in Palos Verdes, the other north of San Francisco.
- All along the western coast of Mexico and Central America, recurring evidence suggests that the Chinese visited ancient Indian's civilizations. Unmistakable Asian statuary, wall drawings, tapestries, and paintings have survived through the years.

Questions to answer

1. Tell us why you left such a great Chinese civilization to cross a great ocean to come to a savage place.
2. Please give us details of your voyage.
3. Sounds like you stayed overnight a few times. Just how long were you gone?
4. Did you take any notes while you were away? If so, how do we know that these notes are accurate?
5. Tell us about your boat. Just how did you make it across the ocean into the unknown?
6. Of the people you visited, are there any traces today that might prove that you were actually there?
7. We hear you might have lost a ship, or at least a couple of anchors, off the California coast. Want to tell us about this?



Acting Tip



Your history text or certain costume history books in your school (or local) library will help you get ideas for your costume.

Characterization

- Try to look Chinese. A black silk robe would be ideal. Constructing a sampan-type hat is not difficult. Pencil in a thin moustache.
- Make a map that shows your travels to the New World of Fusang. Hold it up as you speak and elegantly trace your route with your finger.
- Keep your hands together and bow often. As you address the emcee and the audience, use the word “honorable.”

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS - 1

Background

You are Christopher Columbus, indeed the most famous name in exploration, especially when the topic turns to the discovery of America. *You know you are the true discoverer of America!* You are appearing today only to insure that your name continues to receive the respect and credibility it deserves, even when you are faced by carping critics who would diminish your name's rightful place in history. The other panelists will try to discredit you. Instead of pretenders, you think of them as individuals who have questionable stories with only thin evidence, if any.

Prepare yourself to speak eloquently on your own behalf by reading all the information on this handout.

Born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451, you, Cristoforo Colombo, from an early age felt you had a mission in life. When you became an adult, you felt you must organize an "Enterprise of the Indies," a voyage westward across the Atlantic Ocean to the rich and exotic Indies—Japan, China, and India. Living in Renaissance Italy exposed you to ideas that seemed to make your theory workable. You believed, as all learned people did at this time, that the earth was a sphere, and that therefore the east could be reached by sailing west. Finally, your destiny was placed in the hands of the Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella. They agreed to finance your expedition after Portugal, England, and France rejected your plans.

On August 3, 1492, you sailed from Spain as commander of a small three-ship fleet consisting of the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. Nine days later you put in at the Canary Islands, off the coast of Africa, to make repairs and replenish supplies before the voyage across the uncharted waters of the Atlantic. Embarking from the Canaries on September 6, you set course due west, where you calculated Cipango (Japan, the Indies) to be.

Watching for disgruntled and fearful crew members, you kept two logbooks: one for your men showing slow progress; a second secret one showing actual nautical miles covered. (Ironically, the former one proved to be more accurate!) Moreover, to appease your crew, you pointed out an abundance of seaweed and even a crab to indicate how close land must actually be. By late September, however, several false sightings had made the crews more than a little anxious.

By October 10 you faced a real possibility of open rebellion by a mutinous crew, but you spoke as forcefully and eloquently as possible, placating them with promises of gold. The grumbling faded on the following day as pieces of driftwood and flowers plus live birds gave everyone hope of an immediate landfall in the Indies. That hope was fulfilled when Rodrigo de Triana sighted land at 2 a.m. on October 12, 1492.

SETUP DIRECTIONS - 1

1. **Understanding the confrontation** You should read the entire packet prior to assigning roles to your top 10 to 12 students.
2. **Assigning roles** Once familiar with each role's demands, you need to decide on which students you should select and whether or not you yourself should be the emcee. Obviously, the tally-keeper and the two experts are minor roles which can be filled by first-time volunteers or rather shy students. In any case, ponder your options and then select wisely.
3. **Allocating time** Care has been taken so that this activity requires only one class period for the actual confrontation. Additional time should be allowed for the appropriate debriefing. Some preparation, however, is necessary.



The actual confrontation requires only one class period.

Four or more days before the confrontation

- Fill all roles.
- Duplicate all materials (see #4) and distribute the role sheets, guides, etc.
- Locate props, costumes, risers (if you are elevating the Hamiltonians and Jeffersonians).
- Paint banners, signs if desired (always a good idea).

Two-three days before the confrontation

- Plan a lesson about the Federalist Era.
- Locate any audiovisual materials you may need. One possibility is using CBS's 1986 four-hour miniseries on George Washington.
- Have a brief class, lunch, or after school meeting with the participants to handle problems and answer questions.
- Administer the FEDERALIST ERA SURVEY (i.e., Face-Off Questions) to the class—*except for the eight major participants*. Make sure these students are out of the room going over their roles when you give this test. The responses of the class will serve as an integral part of the *Family Feud* game in a few days. Have the two experts tabulate the results, *which must remain secret*. Make sure there are no leaks of the results.

One day before the confrontation

- Hand out the FEDERALIST ERA background sheet for your students to read. You also may wish to make up some study questions for students to answer about its contents.
- Here are several options for the remainder of the day:

Option 1: Teach a review lesson on the Federalist Era

Option 2: Stage the JEFFERSON-HAMILTON INTERVIEW during the last 10-15 minutes of the period.

Option 3: If you have some "dead" time at the end of the class period, assign students to create signs, banners, or posters for tomorrow's confrontation (see #5 flourishes).

Great American Confrontations

PURPOSE

History teachers throughout the United States are being asked to perform Herculean tasks. Not only are they expected to cover nearly 400 years of history in great detail, they are also expected to present some aspects of career and computer education and to introduce their students to *critical thinking skills*. **Interact** created this Great American Confrontations series for your history classroom to help with the latter responsibility.

Interact's experience has been that these historical confrontations present controversial historical subjects in an imaginative, interesting way. Your students should be instantly involved. They will *confront* those individuals in our past who put careers, fortunes, and, frequently, their actual lives on the line. Thus, these persons in our past lived the tradition of free speech and active citizenship in our society. Having done so, they enriched our American heritage with their diverse opinions and active lives.

From this confrontation experience, your students will specifically gain the following:

- Understand the volatile issue of slavery.
- Learn the philosophies and legacies of important persons prior to the Civil War.
- Appreciate the importance of the give and take of a round-table, a forum, or a discussion group.
- Understand the idea that all ideas have merit and that there is usually more than one side to important issues.
- Understand that open debate/forum is healthy, and that an exchange of differing ideas is an integral necessity of a democratic society.
- Sharpen the skill of differentiating fact and opinion.
- Sharpen listening, note taking, and discussing skills.