

Different Points of View: Europeans vs. Native Americans

Directions: Read each of the documents, and be prepared to discuss the following questions: What are some of the cultural differences that caused misunderstanding between the cultures? Why would the Europeans make such assumptions? What attitudes are evident in the second reading?

Document 1

“He Who Is Stupid Will Serve the Wise Man”

The man rules over the woman, the adult over the child, the father over his children. That is to say, the most powerful and most perfect rule over the weakest and most imperfect. This same relationship exists among men, there being some who by nature are masters and others who by nature are slaves. Those who surpass the rest in prudence and intelligence, although not in physical strength, are by nature the masters. On the other hand those who are dim-witted and mentally lazy, although they may be physically strong enough to fulfill all the necessary tasks, are by nature slaves. It is just and useful that it is this way. We even see it sanctioned in divine law itself, for it is written in the Book of Proverbs: “He who is stupid will serve the wise man.” And so it is with the barbarous and inhumane people [the Indians] who have no civil life and peaceful customs. It will always be just and in conformity with natural law that such people submit to the rule of more cultured and humane princes and nations. Thanks to the virtues and the practical wisdom of their laws, the latter can destroy barbarism and educate these [inferior] people to a more humane and virtuous life. And if the latter reject such rule, it can be imposed upon them by force of arms. Such a war will be just according to natural law. . . .

Now compare these natural qualities of judgement, talent, magnanimity, temperance, humanity, and religion [of the Spanish] with those of these pitiful men [the Indians], in whom you will scarcely find any vestiges of humanness. These people possess neither science nor even an alphabet, nor do they preserve any monuments of their history except for some obscure and vague reminiscences depicted in certain paintings, nor do they have written laws, but barbarous institutions and customs. In regard to their virtues, how much restraint or gentleness are you to expect of men who are devoted to all kinds of intemperate acts and abominable lewdness, including the eating of human flesh? And you must realize that prior to the arrival of the Christians, they did not live in that peaceful kingdom of Saturn [the Golden Age] that the poets imagine, but on the contrary they made war against one another continually and fiercely, with such fury that victory was of no meaning if they did not satiate their monstrous hunger with the flesh of their enemies. . . . These Indians are so cowardly and timid that they could scarcely resist the mere presence of our soldiers. Many times thousands upon thousands of them scattered, fleeing like women before a very few Spaniards, who amounted to fewer than a hundred. . . .¹

Document 2

“Your People Live Only Upon Cod”: An Algonquian Response to European Claims of Cultural Superiority

I am greatly astonished that the French have so little cleverness. . . . Thou reproachest us, very inappropriately, that our country is a little hell in contrast with France, which thou comparest to a terrestrial paradise, inasmuch as it yields thee, so thou sayest, every kind of provision in

¹Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *A Second Democritus: On the Just Causes of the War with the Indians*, in *Culture and Belief in Europe, 1450–1600: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. David Englander, et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1990), 321–23.

abundance. Thou sayest of us also that we are the most miserable and most unhappy of all men, living without religion, without manners, without honour, without social order, and, in a word, without any rules, like the beasts in our woods and our forests, lacking bread, wine, and a thousand other comforts which thou hast in superfluity in Europe. . . . I beg thee now to believe that, all miserable as we seem in thine eyes, we consider ourselves nevertheless much happier than thou in this, that we are very content with the little that we have; and believe also once for all, I pray, that thou deceivest thyself greatly if thou thinkest to persuade us that thy country is better than ours. For if France, as thou sayest, is a little terrestrial paradise, art thou sensible to leave it? And why abandon wives, children, relatives, and friends? Why risk thy life and thy property every year, and why venture thyself with such risk, in any season whatsoever, to the storms and tempests of the sea in order to come to a strange and barbarous country which thou considerest the poorest and least fortunate of the world? Besides, since we are wholly convinced of the contrary, we scarcely take the trouble to go to France, because we fear, with good reason, lest we find little satisfaction there, seeing, in our own experience, that those who are natives thereof leave it every year in order to enrich themselves on our shores. We believe, further, that you are also incomparably poorer than we, and that you are only simple journeymen, valets, servants, and slaves, all masters and grand captains though you may appear, seeing that you glory in our old rags and in our miserable suits of beaver which can no longer be of use to us, and that you find among us, in the fishery for cod which you make in these parts, the wherewithal to comfort your misery and the poverty which oppresses you. As to us, we find all our riches and all our conveniences among ourselves, without trouble and without exposing our lives to the dangers in which you find yourselves constantly through your long voyages. . . . Now tell me this one little thing, if thou hast any sense: Which of these two is the wisest and happiest—he who labours without ceasing and only obtains, and that with great trouble, enough to live on, or he who rests in comfort and finds all that he needs in the pleasure of hunting and fishing? It is true that we have not always had the use of bread and of wine which your France produces; but, in fact, before the arrival of the French in these parts, did not the Gaspesians live much longer than now? And if we have not any longer among us any of those old men of a hundred and thirty to forty years, it is only because we are gradually adopting your manner of living, for experience is making it very plain that those of us live longest who, despising your bread, your wine, and your brandy, are content with their natural food of beaver, of moose, of waterfowl, and fish, in accord with the custom of our ancestors and of all the Gaspesian nation. Learn now, my brother, once for all, because I must open to thee my heart: there is no Indian who does not consider himself infinitely more happy and more powerful than the French.²

²William F. Ganong, trans. and ed., *New Relation of Gaspeia: With the Customs and Religion of the Gaspesian Indians* by Father Chrestien Le Clercq (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1910), 103–6.

Native Americans and Europeans: Responding to a Document-Based Question

Part A.

Directions: Read the document, and determine what Richard White meant by the “middle ground.”

The Middle Ground

... The middle ground is the place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the nonstate world of villages. It is a place where many of the North American subjects and allies of empires lived. It is the area between the historical foreground of European invasion and occupation and the background of Indian defeat and retreat.

On the middle ground diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings. People try to persuade others who are different from themselves by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and practices of those others. They often misinterpret and distort both the values and the practices of those they deal with. . . .

The real crisis and the final dissolution of this [North American] world came when Indians ceased to have the power to force whites onto the middle ground. Then the desires of whites to dictate the terms of accommodation could be given its head. As a consequence, the middle ground eroded.¹

Part B.

Directions: Consider Richard White’s description of the middle ground and the factors that led to European domination over Native Americans. Then examine the following documents and identify elements that led to whites gaining the upper hand. Be prepared to discuss the following question: What were the consequences of European domination in the Americas?

Document 1

Nicholas V, Papal Bull: *Romanus Pontifex* (1455)

... [S]ince we [Pope Nicholas V] had formerly by other letters of ours granted among other things free and ample faculty to the aforesaid King Alfonso—to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit—by having secured the said faculty, the said King Alfonso, or, by his authority, the aforesaid infante, justly and lawfully has acquired and possessed, and doth possess, these islands, lands, harbors, and seas, and they do of right belong and pertain to the said King Alfonso and his successors, nor without special license from King Alfonso and his successors themselves has any other even of the faithful of Christ been entitled hitherto, nor is he by any means now entitled lawfully to meddle therewith. . . .²

¹Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x, xv.

²“The Bull *Romanus Pontifex* (Nicholas V), January 8, 1455,” in *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies to 1648*, ed. Frances Gardiner Davenport (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917), 23.

Document 2

Disease Strikes the Native Population



Fig. 10.1.

Fig. 10.1. Illustration from the Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagun's sixteenth-century treatise *General History of the Things of New Spain*. The Granger Collection, New York.

Document 3

John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (1709)

These *Indians* are a small People, having lost much of their former Numbers, by intestine Broils; but most by the Small-pox, which hath often visited them, sweeping away whole Towns; occasion'd by the immoderate Government of themselves in their Sickness; as I have mention'd before, treating of the *Sewees*. Neither do I know any Savages that have traded with the *English*, but what have been great Losers by this Distemper . . .

. . . [I]t destroy'd whole Towns, without leaving one *Indian* alive in the Village. . . . The Small-Pox and Rum have made such a Destruction amongst them, that, on good grounds, I do believe, there is not the sixth Savage living within two hundred Miles of all our Settlements, as there were fifty Years ago. These poor Creatures have so many Enemies to destroy them, that it's a wonder one of them is left alive near us.³

Document 4

Bloody Brook Massacre, Deerfield, Massachusetts

We now turn one of the darkest pages in the history of our town. Early in the morning of Sept. 18, 1675—a day memorable in our annals—"that most fatal day, the saddest that ever befel New England," Capt. Lothrop, "with his choice company of young men, the very flower of the County of Essex," followed by a slowly moving train of carts, marched proudly down the old Town Street, two miles across South Meadows, up Bars Long Hill, to the heavily wooded plain stretching away to Hatfield meadows. The carts were loaded with bags of wheat, upon which were a few feather beds and some light household stuff. . . . Southward along the narrow Pocumtuck Path, through the primeval woods, moved Lothrop and his men—brave, fearless, foolish. Confident in their numbers, scorning danger, not even a van-guard or flanker was thrown out.

Meanwhile the whole hostile force was lying like serpents in the way; but unlike the more chivalric of these reptiles, their fangs will be felt before a warning is given. The probable leaders were Mattamuck, Sagamore Sam, Matoonas and One Eyed John, of the Nipmucks; Anawan, Penchason, and Tatason, of the Wampanoags, and Sangumachu of the remnant of the Pocumtucks. . . .

. . . The critical moment had come. The fierce war-whoop rang in the ears of the astonished English. . . . The men of Pocumtuck sank, the Flower of Essex withered before it, and the nameless stream was baptized in blood. . . .

. . . Mather says, "This was a black and fatal day, wherein there was eight persons made widows, and six and twenty children made orphans, all in one little Plantation." . . .

Of seventeen men of Pocumtuck who went out in the morning as teamsters, not one returned to tell the tale.⁴

³John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, ed. Hugh Talmage Lefler (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 34, 232.

⁴George Sheldon, "Bloody Brook Massacre," in *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts*, vol. 1 (Greenfield, Mass.: E. A. Hall and Co., 1895), 100–103.

The Lord's Prayer in Micmac Hieroglyphics

THE LORD'S PRAYER IN MICMAC HIEROGLYPHICS.












					
n'wahinen Our Father	Wajok in heaven	obin seated	tchiptook may	daiwig thy name	
					
meguidemok be respected	Wajok in heaven	n'taldanen to us	tchiptook may	ignemwick grant	uis thee
					
nemlek to see	niodechinen. in staying.	Natel There	wajok in heaven	dell as	ehkedoak thou art obeyed
					
tchiptook may	dell so	be	ehkedulek obeyed	makimguek on earth	aimak where we are
					
Delamukabeniguzi As thou hast given it to us	echemloguel in the same manner	apch also	neguech now	kiohkoek to-day	
					
delamooktech give it	ponegunnenwin our nourishment	nillanen; to us;	dell we forgive those	abkchiktakachik we forgive those	
					
wegaWismotnik who have offended us	elp so	kel thou	nixkam O God	abkchiktwin forgive	olwoutiek our faults
					
mekenlirech hold us strong	winchndil by the hand	ma not	k'tynginen to fall	koginnkamkoi keep far from us	
					
winchiguel sufferings	twaktwin. evils.	N'olieteh. Amen.			

Fig. 10.2.

Fig. 10.2. The Lord's Prayer in Micmac Hieroglyphics. From *First Establishment of the Faith in New France* by Father Chrestien Le Clercq, trans. John Shea (New York: John G. Shea, 1881), opposite 16.

Document 6

French Fur Trade in the Colony and the Problem of the Iroquois

So long as all the young men devote themselves to no other occupation than That of Coming here for Beaver, There can be no hope that the Colony will Ever become flourishing; it will always be poor, for it will always lose thereby What would most enrich it,—I mean the labor of all the young men. Such, Monseigneur, is what I consider the most important step for the Temporal and spiritual welfare of the Colony, and what should, in Conscience, be most strongly represented to his majesty, by making him thoroughly Understand its necessity,—so that he may give orders to seek for and to find every possible means of restoring the Trade with the savages, and of establishing it at montreal, so as to keep all the young men in the country, and accustom them to work from early youth. To This end, The Iroquois must be completely tamed and reduced to subjection; and we must take possession of his country, which is much better than Those of all the nations up here. He is the only Enemy whom we have to Dread, or who disputes with us the Trade of the savages, which he tries to attract to the english. What reason was there for not consenting to destroy him in the war that we had undertaken to wage Against him? Why was he Spared? What would we lose by destroying him, now that his nation is so small in numbers? His destruction and the possession of his country would secure for us the Trade of all the savage nations up here. Nothing would remain to be done but to settle the boundaries of our Commerce and of That of the misissipy, so that one might not clash with the other. The Iroquois has been Spared in the present war solely on account of the trade of Catarakouy; and the trade of Cataracouy was only for Those who Preserved That fort and That enemy. Whence comes the Iroquois's Beaver but from the country up here, which he usurps from our savages, to whom all The Beavers belong? Should we lose the Iroquois's Beavers by his destruction? Would they not revert to our savages, and from them to the Colony?⁵

⁵“Letter by Reverend Father Étienne de Carheil to Monsieur Louis Hector de Callières, Governor [on Conditions in the Upper Lakes in 1702],” in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791*, vol. 65, 1696–1702, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers Co., 1900), 223, 225.