

## 1492 Columbus vs Indigenous People poems

#1

IN 1492

In fourteen hundred ninety-two  
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

He had three ships and left from Spain;  
He sailed through sunshine, wind and rain.

He sailed by night; he sailed by day;  
He used the stars to find his way.

A compass also helped him know  
How to find the way to go.

Ninety sailors were on board;  
Some men worked while others snored.

Then the workers went to sleep;  
And others watched the ocean deep.

Day after day they looked for land;  
They dreamed of trees and rocks and sand.

October 12 their dream came true,  
You never saw a happier crew!

"Indians! Indians!" Columbus cried;  
His heart was filled with joyful pride.

But "India" the land was not;  
It was the Bahamas, and it was hot.

The Taino natives were very nice;  
They gave the sailors food and spice.

Columbus sailed on to find some gold  
To bring back home, as he'd been told.

He made the trip again and again,  
Trading gold to bring to Spain.

## Questions after reading

How do you think the author wants  
you to feel about Columbus's voyage?

How does the author explain  
Columbus?

From this writing what point of view is  
this from?

The first American? No, not quite.  
But Columbus was brave, and he was bright.

#2:

### Fourteen Hundred Ninety-Two (The Rewrite)

In Fourteen Hundred and Ninety Two,  
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.  
But everything else in the childhood rhyme,  
Ignores the historic details and genocide.

The overland route between Asia and Spain,  
Was closed making trade very hard to maintain.  
But Oriental goods were in high demand,  
A new route would allow this exchange to expand.

Aristotle had proved that the world was round,  
You could reach eastern Asia by sailing westbound.  
The Ancient Greeks calculated the length of the trip,  
Far exceeding the range of the most modern ship.

Columbus made absurd and outrageous guarantees,  
About his nautical calculations and skills at Sea.  
But despite reservations expressed by the King,  
He was given three ships outfitted by the Queen.

He set sail in August of 1492,  
his Log Book describes what he planned to do.  
To take wealth and riches wherever they were found,  
His thievery would become historically profound.

Columbus reached Islands in the Caribbean Sea,  
Not even close to where he thought he should be.  
He said there was gold and made other false claims,  
To gain the support for more voyages from Spain.

Columbus described the Natives as being,  
Generous, hospitable, and very agreeing.  
Not quarrelsome, excitable — devoid of hate,  
He exclaimed they'd be easy to dominate.

### Questions after reading

How do you think the author wants you to feel about Columbus's voyage?

How does the author explain Columbus?

From this writing what point of view is this from?

He made several voyages to the Caribbean Sea,  
Visited the mainland where he thought Asia should be.  
He colonized the region and controlled everything,  
Destroying the culture and lives of every human being.

He appointed himself Governor; no one disagreed,  
Extermination of the Natives could then proceed.  
Their homes and lands were taken by force,  
Those not killed were enslaved without remorse.

He created a "tribute system" very tragic to behold,  
Intended to fulfill Spain's unending lust for gold.  
Requiring a quota from every Native over fourteen,  
Or their hands were cut off, death became quite routine.

Natives were raped at will and many used as slaves,  
The rest were exterminated, in a variety of ways.  
By burning, hanging, cut in pieces or in half,  
Babies swung by the feet and their skulls were smashed.

He initiated the conquest and genocide,  
During his expeditions, 9 million people died.  
Following the "Civilization" of the Western Hemisphere,  
100 million vanished as a result of European profiteers.

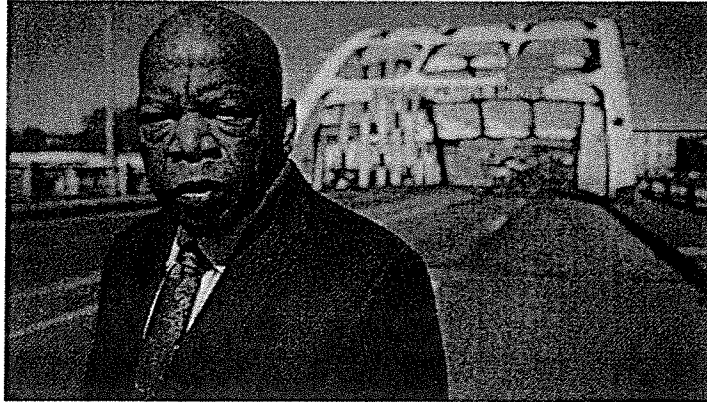
Columbus didn't keep the promises made to the Crown,  
And a sea route to Asia, he never found.  
He could not deliver on his guarantees of Gold,  
But colonization of the Americas began to unfold

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<https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/fourteen-hundred-ninety-two-the-columbus-poem-rewritten-kXpeMslQoE6KPIJyQbgXnQ/>



## Together, You Can Redeem the Soul of Our Nation

By John Lewis



*Though I am gone, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart  
and stand up for what you truly believe.*

July 30, 2020

While my time here has now come to an end, I want you to know that in the last days and hours of my life you inspired me. You filled me with hope about the next chapter of the great American story when you used your power to make a difference in our society. Millions of people motivated simply by human compassion laid down the burdens of division. Around the country and the world you set aside race, class, age, language and nationality to demand respect for human dignity.

That is why I had to visit Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington, though I was admitted to the hospital the following day. I just had to see and feel it for myself that, after many years of silent witness, the truth is still marching on.

Emmett Till was my George Floyd. He was my Rayshard Brooks, Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor. He was 14 when he was killed, and I was only 15 years old at the time. I will never ever forget the moment when it became so clear that he could easily have been me. In those days, fear constrained us like an imaginary prison, and troubling thoughts of potential brutality committed for no understandable reason were the bars.

Though I was surrounded by two loving parents, plenty of brothers, sisters and cousins, their love could not protect me from the unholy oppression waiting just outside that family circle. Unchecked, unrestrained violence and government-sanctioned terror had the power to turn a simple stroll to the store for some Skittles or an innocent morning jog down a lonesome country

road into a nightmare. If we are to survive as one unified nation, we must discover what so readily takes root in our hearts that could rob Mother Emanuel Church in South Carolina of her brightest and best, shoot unwitting concertgoers in Las Vegas and choke to death the hopes and dreams of a gifted violinist like Elijah McClain.

Like so many young people today, I was searching for a way out, or some might say a way in, and then I heard the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on an old radio. He was talking about the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. He said we are all complicit when we tolerate injustice. He said it is not enough to say it will get better by and by. He said each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up and speak out. When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.

Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble. Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.

You must also study and learn the lessons of history because humanity has been involved in this soul-wrenching, existential struggle for a very long time. People on every continent have stood in your shoes, through decades and centuries before you. The truth does not change, and that is why the answers worked out long ago can help you find solutions to the challenges of our time. Continue to build union between movements stretching across the globe because we must put away our willingness to profit from the exploitation of others.

Though I may not be here with you, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe. In my life I have done all I can to demonstrate that the way of peace, the way of love and nonviolence is the more excellent way. Now it is your turn to let freedom ring.

When historians pick up their pens to write the story of the 21st century, let them say that it was your generation who laid down the heavy burdens of hate at last and that peace finally triumphed over violence, aggression and war. So I say to you, walk with the wind, brothers and sisters, and let the spirit of peace and the power of everlasting love be your guide.

**Source:** <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/opinion/john-lewis-civil-rights-america.html>

**Vocal Recording of the Source:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2DSkAys-8>



