

## Images of Columbus

## Thinking IT THROUGH

1. What perspectives are shown in these two images of Columbus?
2. What might account for the differences in these views of Columbus?

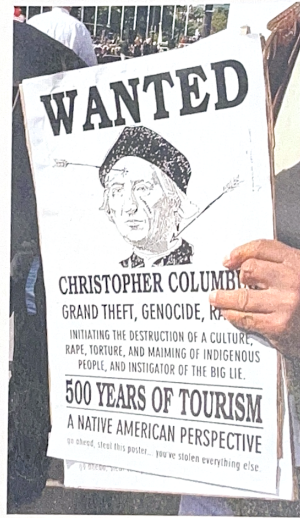


FIGURE 10-9 A modern poster of Christopher Columbus.



FIGURE 10-10 This painting of Columbus being received at the Spanish court after his first voyage was created by the French artist Eugène Delacroix in the 1800s.

## COMPARING VIEWPOINTS

## The Spanish in the Caribbean

The following historical accounts reveal the relations between the Spanish explorers and the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean. The first is an excerpt from a letter written by Christopher Columbus.

... I found very many islands peopled with inhabitants beyond number. And, of them all, I have taken possession for their Highnesses [the king and queen of Spain]. The people of this island, and of all others that I have found and seen or not seen, all go naked. It is true that since becoming more assured, and losing their terror, they are generous with all that they have, to such a degree as no one would believe it but he who had seen it. Of anything they have, if it be asked for, they never say no... They all believe that power and goodness are in the sky, and they believe very firmly that I, with these ships and crew, came from the sky...

The second excerpt was written by a Spanish Dominican missionary named Bartolomé de las Casas. He describes an incident on the island of Cuba in 1513, just 20 years after Columbus's first voyage. By this time the Spanish had established colonies and farms in Cuba, and had enslaved many local Indigenous peoples.

One time the Indians came to meet us and to greet us with food and good cheer and entertainment... [T]hey presented us with a great quantity of fish and bread and other food, together with everything else they could think to do for us. But the Devil entered into the Spaniards, and they put them all to the sword in my presence, without any cause whatsoever. More than three thousand souls were laid out before us, men, women, and children. I saw there such great cruelties that no man alive either has or shall see the like.

## Thinking IT THROUGH

1. Compare the information and attitudes expressed in these two accounts.
2. How do you explain the differences in the two accounts? Why might relations between the Europeans and the Indigenous peoples have changed in 20 years?
3. **Judgements** Based on the documents, there can be no doubt that the treatment of the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean by the Spanish was unjustifiably brutal. Prepare an argument for or against the notion that these peoples should be compensated today for the lost lands and the enslavement of their ancestors.