

Imagining the Taínos: A Different Perspective

This activity is based upon resources from RTC. RTC provides three different short articles or stories about the Taíno that will help to familiarize students with this people group, since so often little information is given about the Taíno in accounts about Columbus.

1. “The Taínos “Men of the Good”” by Jose Barreiro from RTC (pp. 106-7)
2. “The Gold People” by Anna Hereford from RTC (p. 110)
3. “Taino Resistance: Enrique’s Uprising” by Alvin Josephy, Jr. from RTC (p. 111)

Again, depending upon the grade level of the students, these resources can be used as a read aloud activity where the teacher reads and students follow along with their own copy, a teacher directed small group guided reading activity, a student directed small group reading, or an individual reading assignment.

Bigelow’s article “Imagining the Taínos” taken from RTC (p. 108) offers an excellent plan for how to use these resources. He outlines how he uses these resources in his classroom to create the basis for a writing activity. He provides guiding questions to ask the students in order to push them to really think about the point of view of the Taíno. Then, for the writing assignment, students are asked to “imagine that they are Taínos and to record their reaction to the arrival of Columbus. They might write a series of diary entries, a short story, an autobiography, a dialogue, etc.” (p. 108).

The book “The Taínos” by Francine Jacobs with illustrations by Patrick Collins (G.P Putnam’s Sons: New York, 1992) is another good resource for information about the Taíno. It is a non-fiction book that can be used in various ways. In terms of a reading level, it is probably written at a level comparable to middle or high school, so depending upon the level of your students it may need to be used as a read aloud activity. Individual chapters can also be copied for students or groups, as the chapters are topic specific. Then after reading the specific chapter students could create a project or poster to present to the class to share the information they learned with the rest of the class.