

ac pulchri, vasta rura, nemora, campi feracissimi seri
 pascuisque et condendis aedificiis aptissimi. Portuum
 in hac insula commoditas et praestantia fluminum copia
 25 salubritate admixta hominum—quae nisi quis viderit—
 credulitatem superat. Huius arbores, pascua et fructus
 multum ab illis Joannae differunt. Haec praeterea Hispana
 diverso aromatis genere, auro metallisque abundat.

TRANSLATION

That mentioned (island) Joanna and the other islands in that area appeared to be as fertile as possible. This one is surrounded by many secure and very wide ports, nor are others which I have ever seen to be compared (comparable). Many large and healthful rivers flow through this (island), and also there are many very lofty mountains upon it. All these islands are very beautiful and different with various styles: they are accessible and (they are) filled with a very great variety of surrounding trees. (NB: **Sidera** is included in all of the Latin editions of this letter; its intended meaning is unclear and thus English translations omit it.) I believe that these never are deprived of (to be deprived of) their foliage, to be sure I saw them so (as) flourishing and decorated as they are accustomed to be in the month of May in Spain. Some of them flowering, others full of fruit, others in another state according to the quality of each one were flourishing. The nightingale and other birds varied and innumerable were chattering in the month of November, in which I myself was walking through them (the woods).

Moreover in the said island Joanna are seven or eight kinds of palms. These surpassed ours easily in height and beauty (in the same way as all the rest of trees, plants, and fruits). There are also wonderful pines, fields and very vast meadows, various birds, various kinds of honey, and various metals, with the exception of iron. Moreover in that island, which we said earlier to be named Hispana, there are very great beautiful mountains, vast fields, groves, and very fertile plains very suitable to be planted and for pastures and for buildings to be constructed. The convenience of the ports on this island and the outstanding supply of rivers mixed in for the health

of men—which unless anyone sees—surpasses belief. The trees, pastures, and fruits of this (island) differ much from those of Joanna. Besides this Hispana abounds in different kind(s) of spices, gold, and metals.

GRAMMAR AND WORD USE QUESTIONS

1. Cite superlative adjectives in the first four sentences and discuss Columbus's use of them.

Quam fertilissimae, tutissimis, maximi, eminentissimi, pulcherrimae; all express Columbus's exuberance about the fertility, safety (of harbors), the huge mountains, and the beautiful scene.

2. How does the first superlative differ from the others?

Quam fertilissimae says not that these are very fertile, but rather as fertile as it is possible for land to be.

3. In the sentence beginning with *haec*, find and translate the relative clause of characteristic.

Quos umquam viderim "which I have ever seen."

4. Find four other superlatives in the latter part of the passage and discuss their use.

Vastissima, maximi, feracissimi, aptissimi; these superlatives reiterate points Columbus has made earlier about the size and fertility of the fields, the size of the mountains, and the suitability of the island for building and farming.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. In the first three sentences, cite three important factors in favor of the island.

The fertility of the land, the size and safety of the harbors, and the abundant and healthful waters of the rivers.

2. What especially amazes Columbus about the time of year?

The plants are flourishing and blooming as they would in May in Spain, and this is autumn.

3. What surprises him about the birds?

They are numerous in November, so they obviously do not migrate further south.