

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.

4. What does he say about the plants as compared to those in Europe?

These easily surpass the plants in Europe.

5. What factors does he reiterate on the second island as unbelievable?

The fertile plains, the convenient harbors, and the rivers.

6. What two very valuable commodities has he found here?

Spices and metals.

7. How do Columbus's observations reflect his background as a trade representative?

He is observing the harbors and rivers for transport, the crops that could be grown here, and the valuable commodities to be traded.



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