

Columbus and the Egg

CCSSR1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

This text adapted by the Center for Urban Education from a text that is in the public domain.

By James Baldwin (Adapted) From Thirty More Famous Stories Retold.

Original Copyright, 1903, by American Book Company.

This is a story about Columbus. He was an explorer. He is the explorer who came to the Americas from Spain in 1492. This is a story about what might have happened long ago when he was back in Spain.

When Columbus came back from his trip to the Americas, many people praised him. He was made an admiral. That means he was a leader. People said what a great thing he had done. But not everyone liked him. Some were jealous of all the attention he got.

One day Columbus was at a party that a Spanish gentleman gave in his honor. People were saying, "What a great discovery you have made." Several persons were present who were jealous of the great admiral's success. They were proud, conceited fellows, and they very soon began to try to make Columbus uncomfortable.

"You have discovered strange lands beyond the seas," they said, "but what of that? We do not see why there should be so much said about it. Anybody can sail across the ocean; and anybody can coast along the islands on the other side, just as you have done. It is the simplest thing in the world."

Columbus made no answer; but after a while he took an egg from a dish and said to the company: "Who among you, gentlemen, can make this egg stand on end?"

One by one those at the table tried the experiment. When the egg had gone entirely around and none had succeeded, all said that it could not be done.

Then Columbus took the egg and struck its small end gently upon the table so as to break the shell a little. After that there was no trouble in making it stand upright.

"Gentlemen," said he, "what is easier than to do this which you said was impossible? It is the simplest thing in the world. Anybody can do it--AFTER HE HAS BEEN SHOWN HOW!"

What is a lesson people can learn from this story?

Underline the parts of the story that show that is the lesson you can learn.