

## 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.

*Includes questions you can ask about any story.*

Story Source: Public Domain, adapted by Center for Urban Education

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

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This is a story about Columbus, the explorer who “discovered” America. We have put “discovered” in quotation marks because actually other people already lived on the continent long before Columbus made his voyage in 1492. This is a story about what might have happened long ago when he was back in Spain. Is it accurate, did it really occur? That’s not known, but it is a story that could have happened. Stories such as this are passed from generation to generation and sometimes are based on facts.

When Columbus came back from his trip to the Americas, many people praised him. He was made an admiral, he had made a remarkable voyage despite many challenges. People said what a great thing he had done, discovering the Americas. However, not everyone appreciated him, there were some who were jealous of all the adulation

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 resented this great admiral's success. They were proud and conceited, 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. All you need to do is sail West, that’s not a remarkable feat.”

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?”

“That’s impossible,” the host replied. “You would need to be a magician to do that.” 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, it was defying gravity.

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!”

*Write your answers to these questions on another page.*

1. Sequence: Which event happened first? Which happened last?
2. Character Traits: Name one character. What is one trait you infer that character has? Explain why you think that.
3. Motive: What is something that person does? Why do you think that person does that?
4. Summarize: Summarize the story in four sentences. Tell about the characters and what they do.
5. Main Idea: What do you think is the main idea of the story? Why?