

SOAPStone Analysis Assignment

For each document, you must answer the following questions.

- S— Who is the speaker?
- O— What is the occasion?
- A— Who is the audience?
- P— What is the purpose?
- S— Who is the subject?
- Tone— What is the tone?

Document One: Juan Gines de Sepulveda— Belittles the Indians. 1547

*Juan Gines de Sepulveda was an outstanding example of the “Renaissance man.” A Spaniard who studied in the cradle of the Renaissance, Italy, he achieved fame as a theologian, philosopher, historian, and astronomer. When Emperor Charles V convened a debate in Valladolid, Spain, in 1550-1551 to determine the future of Spain’s relationship with the American aborigines, he naturally turned to Sepulveda as one of the most learned men in his realm. As a student of Aristotle, Sepulveda relied heavily on the classical distinction between “civilized” Greeks and “barbarians.” The selection that follows is not a transcript of the debate at Valladolid but an excerpt from Sepulveda’s book *The Second Democrates*, published in 1547, in which he set forth his basic arguments. What differences does Sepulveda emphasize between Europeans (especially Spaniards) and the Indians, and on what grounds does he assert the superiority of European culture?*

You surely do not expect me to recall at length the prudence and talents of the Spanish. . . . And what can I say of the gentleness and humanity of our people, who, even in battle, after having gained the victory, put forth their greatest effort and care to save the greatest possible number of the conquered and to protect them from the cruelty of their allies?

Compare, then, these gifts of prudence, talent, magnanimity, temperance, humanity, and religion with those possessed by these half-men (homunculi), in whom you will barely find the vestiges of humanity, who not only do not possess any learning at all, but are not even literate or in possession of any monument to their history except for some obscure and vague reminiscences of several things put down in various paintings; nor do they have written laws, but barbarian institutions and customs. Well, then, if we are dealing with virtue, what temperance or mercy can you expect from men who are committed to all types of intemperance and base frivolity, and eat human flesh? And do not believe that before the arrival of the Christians they lived in that pacific kingdom of Saturn which the poets have invented; for, on the contrary, they waged continual and ferocious war upon one another with such fierceness that they did not consider a victory at all worthwhile unless they sated their monstrous hunger with the flesh of their enemies. Furthermore these Indians were otherwise so cowardly and timid that they could barely endure the presence of our soldiers, and many times thousands upon thousands of them scattered in flight like women before Spaniards so few that they did not even number one hundred. . . .

Document One: Bartolome de las Casas– Defends the Indians. 1551

*The Dominican friar Bartolome de Las Casas was Sepulveda's great antagonist in the debates of 1550-1551 at Valladolid. As a young man, Las Casas had sailed with one of the first Spanish expeditions to the West Indies in 1502. A humane, sensitive priest, he was soon repelled by his countrymen's treatment of the native peoples of the New World. He eventually became bishop of Guatemala and devoted himself to reforming Spanish colonial policies—for which he was recognized as the "protector of the Indians." His vivid and polemical account *The Destruction of the Indies* did much to spread the "Black Legend" of Spain's brutal behavior in the New World—a legend not without substance, and eagerly exploited by the rival English. How are his views of the Indians different from those of Sepulveda? What ideas did the two debaters share?*

Now if they are to be subjugated by war because they are ignorant of polished literature, . . . I would like to hear Sepulveda, in his cleverness, answer this question: Does he think that the war of the Romans against the Spanish was justified in order to free them from barbarism? And this question also: Did the Spanish wage an unjust war when they vigorously defended themselves against them?

Next, I call the Spaniards who plunder that unhappy people torturers. Do you think that the Romans, once they had subjugated the wild and barbaric peoples of Spain, could with secure right divide all of you among themselves, handing over so many head of both males and females as allotments to individuals? And do you then conclude that the Romans could have stripped your rulers of their authority and consigned all of you, after you had been deprived of your liberty, to wretched labors, especially in searching for gold and silver lodes and mining and refining the metals? . . . For God's sake and man's faith in him, is this the way to impose the yoke of Christ on Christian men? Is this the way to remove wild barbarism from the minds of barbarians? Is it not, rather, to act like thieves, cut-throats, and cruel plunderers and to drive the gentlest of people headlong into despair? The Indian race is not that barbaric, nor are they dull witted or stupid, but they are easy to teach and very talented in learning all the liberal arts, and very ready to accept, honor, and observe the Christian religion and correct their sins (as experience has taught) once priests have introduced them to the sacred mysteries and taught them the word of God. They have been endowed with excellent conduct, and before the coming of the Spaniards, as we have said, they had political states that were well founded on beneficial laws. Furthermore, they are so skilled in every mechanical art that with every right they should be set ahead of all the nations of the known world on this score, so very beautiful in their skill and artistry are the things this people produces in the grace of its architecture, its painting, and its needlework.

Thought Questions:

After completing your document analysis, please answer the following questions. What differences does Sepulveda emphasize between Europeans and the Indians, and on what grounds does he assert the superiority of European culture? How are the views of de las Casas different from those of Sepulveda? What ideas did the two debaters share?