



2017

# City of Gold

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# Play Review

**Title:** City of Gold

**Anthology:** International Plays for Young Audiences

**Author:** Charles Smith

**Reviewer:** Rebeca Wallin

**Publisher:** Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

**Publication Year:** 2000

**Number of Pages:** 28

**Production Requirements:** Minimal set and prop requirements, ability to convey distance and space in concurrent scenes on a single stage.

**Estimated Run Time:** 40 minutes

**Number of Acts:** 1

**Number of Characters:** 5

**Cast Requirements:** 5 Male

**Time Period:** Present day and 1492-1493

**Reading/Interest Level:** Intermediate, Young Adult

**Rating:** Dependable

## Review

The “true” story is sought to be told in this raw and unromantic version of an event in the life of Christopher Columbus. When the Santa Maria was run aground near present day Haiti during their first expedition to the new world, Columbus and his men were forced to land. They negotiated with a native tribe and were allowed to use the wood from the Santa Maria to build a fort and small settlement – La Navidad, the first Spanish settlement in the new world - and leave the crew behind since there was no room on the other ships. Through a series of misunderstandings that escalated into horrible atrocities against the native people, the entire crew was slaughtered by the tribe. Though the historical events pertaining to the actual event are somewhat shrouded in mystery, the plot presents a plausible recreation of what could have occurred (albeit a version skewed toward the explorers being mainly at fault and consumed by greed for gold). One misrepresentation to note: in an attempt to include the notable character of Columbus more heavily, he is more present than in the actual historical event.

This play is a good introduction to a largely ignored piece of history and provides ample opportunity for pre- and post-show exploration. This makes it particularly appealing for a Theatre for Young Audiences production, especially as an educational tour. The language barriers and resultant misunderstandings between the native peoples and Spanish explorers are convincingly portrayed, at times allowing for some comedy to lighten the dark plot. Throughout the script, concurrent scenes are played on stage necessitating careful staging. In this particular edition those scenes are not divided and delineated, creating some extra work for the director.