# Historical Narratives and the Depiction of Tropical Rain Forests and People

Whether or not you realize it, every time you reads a passage of text you are breaking it apart into its unique elements - words - and then analyzing the words and their arrangement into sentences to infer what the author hopes to convey. This interpretation will be shaped in part by your experiences, the cultural environment in which you were raised, and the sociopolitical moment in which they are read.

As readers we usually do this *"Text Analysis"* subconsciously, but we can also step back and do it explicitly: we can extract keywords from the text and analyze them to draw conclusions about the messages conveyed by an author's choices. For instance, we can analyze if the words used in a passage have meanings that are typically "positive", "negative", or "neutral", and from that conclude what a reader of a passage would conclude about the subject matter This is called *Sentiment Analysis*

**You will be doing some simple Sentiment Analysis on reports written by some of the first Europeans to travel through (*i.e.*, 'explore') tropical rain forests.** We will then use your results to collectively identify the major themes these historical reports established about tropical forests and the people that lived there. In future sessions, we will attempt to determine if these themes are reflected in over 500 years of cultural expression ranging from poetry to comic books *(spoiler alert: they are)*.

**Instructions - Part 1 (Do on your own, bring to the next session)**

1. Download the .pdf file of historical texts and images: [link to file] and the spreadsheet for recording data [link to download].
2. Read (or examine) each text or image. As you do so, mark or note especially powerful descriptions of places, people, or behavior.
3. Enter these words or phrases into this spreadsheet. Be sure to note from which text they came (Item1, Item2, etc.)
4. Assign each of these words/phrases a score based on if they are 'positive (+1)', 'negative (-1)', or 'neutral (0)'.
5. Upload the spreadsheet with the words/phrases and their scores to Canvas when finished

**Once you have read and scored all the passages, take a step back:**

> Can you identify some major themes (= *narratives*) about Tropical Rain Forests and the people living in them that emerge from these passages? Put another way, what would you conclude about thee places and people if you were reading these passages *at the time they were written*?

We will compare conclusions as a group in the next session, so *bring your marked texts, score sheets, and conclusions and come prepared to discuss them with your classmates*