

## THE ARRIVAL OF THE SPANIARDS

Soon after Columbus landed in the Americas in 1492, the Spanish began settlements in the "new world." The Spanish governor of Cuba sent expeditions into Mexico in 1517 and 1518. Hernando Cortés headed the third expedition in 1519. They were looking for riches and slave labor for the plantations in Cuba. Cortés and his men, known as Conquistadors, encountered the Aztecs.

Cortés and his men conquered the Aztecs in just three years. Many Indians helped Cortés defeat the Aztecs. The other Indian tribes resented the heavy taxes they were paying the Aztecs.

The great Aztec chief, Montezuma, did not oppose the Spaniards. He remembered an Aztec legend that said that the powerful god Quetzalcoatl had sailed across the sea and would return someday. Montezuma had never seen white men before. The metal armor of the Spanish also impressed him. Montezuma thought Cortés represented the returning god. Since he offered no resistance, the Spanish took Montezuma prisoner.

In 1520, the Aztecs rebelled against the invaders and drove the Spanish from the city. By May 1521, Cortés and his men returned. They began a bloody attack against the Aztecs. Montezuma died from wounds he received in the attack. The next Aztec ruler, Cuauhtemoc, surrendered to the Spanish in August 1521.

The Spanish conquerors destroyed the Aztec cities. They made the Aztecs their slaves. The conquistadors took the Aztecs' gold and other treasures and sent them to Spain. Later, Spanish missionaries arrived. They destroyed Aztec temples and wiped out all traces of the Aztec religion. The religion of the white man soon replaced the old Indian beliefs.

The Indians had little chance against the invaders. The Spanish had better weapons and armor than the Indian tribes. The Spanish also brought a new disease called smallpox with them from Europe. The Indians did not have any resistance to this new infection. Thousands of Indians died from the disease. Many Indian warriors also died from the disease.

After defeating the Aztecs, the Spanish invaders fought the Incas and the Mayas. The Spanish defeated the Incas in 1533. The last city of the Mayas fell in March 1697. The Spanish now had full control of the region.



**When Montezuma met Cortés, he thought the Spaniard was the god Quetzalcoatl returning from across the sea, so he did not oppose the Spanish.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Who was the leader of the Spanish conquerors?

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2. What were Spanish invaders known as?

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3. How long did it take the Spanish to conquer the Aztecs?

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4. What was the name of the Aztec chief?

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5. In what year did the Aztecs surrender to the Spaniards?

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6. Why did the Aztecs have no chance against the Spanish conquerors?

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7. What did the Spaniards do with the Aztec gold and treasures that they found?

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8. What disease helped the Spanish defeat the Aztecs?

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9. What was the next Indian civilization conquered by the Spaniards?

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10. How many years were there between the defeat of the Aztecs and the Incas? the Aztecs and the Mayas?

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