

TLC Elementary School Lesson Plan Conquest of the Americas

Subject

World History

Grade level

3-5

Duration

One or two class periods

Objectives

Students will:

- learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the Aztecs and Inca;
- create a picture book showing the conquest of one of these two empires; and
- discuss the similarities and differences of the Aztecs and Inca and how the Spaniards defeated both groups.

Materials:

- Paper and pencils
- Colored pencils or markers
- Computer with Internet access (optional)
- *Conquest of the Americas* video and VCR

Procedures:

1. Begin the lesson by reviewing the stories of the Aztecs of Mexico and the Incas of Peru. A good way to go over this topic is to show segments of the video *Conquest of the Americas*.
2. Based on the content of the video, make a class list of factors that contributed to each conqueror's success. Help students conclude the following:
 - Cortés united dissatisfied groups under Aztec rule to help the Spaniards defeat the Aztecs.
 - Both Cortes and Pizarro's cavalries were superior to the battle techniques of the Aztecs and Inca.
 - Smallpox and other European diseases contributed to diminishing the populations of the Aztec and Inca Empires.
 - Much division within the Inca Empire worked to Pizarro's advantage.
3. After students have become familiar with the key elements of each story, divide them into pairs. Have each pair choose to focus on the Aztecs or Inca. Try to have an equal number of students working on each story. Tell the pairs to develop picture books explaining how their group was conquered. The pairs should be sure to cover the following points:

- Strengths of the Aztecs or Inca
 - Weaknesses of the Aztecs or Inca
 - Reasons for Spanish victories
4. Give students time in class to research their topics and complete their picture books. Then have each pair present their books to the class. Additional information is found at the Web sites below.

Hernán Cortés

<http://www.umich.edu/~proflame/texts/mirror/conflict.html>

http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtcortes.html

<http://www.virtualology.com/virtualmuseumofhistory/hallofexplorers/HERNANDOCORTES.COM/>

Francisco Pizarro

http://www.bruce.ruiz.net/PanamaHistory/francisco_pizarro.htm

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/eurvoya/inca.html

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/7012/pizarro.html>

<http://www.carpenoetm.tv/military/pizarro.html>

5. Conclude the lesson by discussing differences and similarities between the Spaniards' treatment of the Aztecs and Inca. In what ways were they similar? Which conquistador showed more compassion? How did events beyond the Spaniards' control lead to their success?

Help students conclude that while Cortés showed somewhat more compassion for the Aztecs than Pizarro did for the Inca, both greedy conquistadors were fighting to expand the Spanish Empire. Their superior cavalries contributed to their success. The native groups were also defeated by a smallpox epidemic, which killed thousands of people.

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students participate actively in class discussions; created highly attractive and informative picture books based on research; and drew insightful conclusions based on the lesson.

2 points: Students participated in class discussions; created attractive and somewhat informative picture books based on some research, and draw some conclusions based on the lesson.

1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; did not complete their picture books; and had difficulty drawing conclusions based on the lesson.

Vocabulary:

Aztecs

Definition: A Native American people who built an empire in Mexico that thrived during the 1400s and early 1500s

Context: Famine and disease contributed to the defeat of the Aztecs at the hands of the Spaniards.

conquistador

Definition: The Spanish word for conqueror; the term refers to the first Europeans who entered a region for the purpose of forcing the native peoples out and settling in the area.

Context: The conquistadors of Spain were famous for conquering New World empires and for taking as much gold as they could.

Hernán Cortés

Definition: A Spanish conquistador who defeated the Aztecs in 1521

Context: Hernán Cortés forged an alliance among some Indian groups under Aztec control, which helped him defeat this mighty empire.

Inca

Definition: A South American Indian people that established one of the largest and wealthiest empires in the Americas. At its height, the empire extended more than 2,500 miles along the western coast of South America.

Context: A key similarity between the Aztecs and Inca was a lack of unity among different Indian groups that made up each empire.

Moctezuma

Definition: The Aztec emperor from 1502 to 1519

Context: Moctezuma's mistakes dealing with Cortés contributed to his death and the fall of the Aztec Empire.

Francisco Pizarro

Definition: The Spanish conquistador who vanquished the Inca Empire in 1534

Context: Francisco Pizarro was a fierce and ruthless leader, determined to defeat the Inca and take over their empire.

Academic Standards

This lesson plan addresses the following standards from the National Council for the Social Studies

- I. Culture
- II. Time, Continuity, and Change
- IV. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- VI. Power, Authority, and Governance

Credit

Marilyn Fenichel, education writer and editor