

The Explorers

Hernán Cortés: Conqueror of Mexico

Teacher's Guide



Grade Level: 6–8

Curriculum Focus: Social Studies

Lesson Duration: 3 class periods

Program Description

Hernán Cortés – An Introduction (1 min.) – Presents highlights of the life, travels, and conquests of Hernán Cortés. **Cortés – Background and Early Years** (3 min.) – Examines Cortés' motivation for joining an expedition to the New World and how earlier European explorers paved the way for his conquests. **Cortés Sails to Mexico** (4 min.) – Follows Cortés' journeys to Cuba and along the Mexican coast, where he learned of a rich civilization called the Aztec. **The Aztec** (3 min.) – Explores the world of the Aztec, a powerful tribe that lived in what we now know as Mexico. **Cortés Meets the Aztec** (4 min.) – Chronicles how Cortés and his soldiers first met the Aztec in peace, then decided to attack their empire. **The Establishment of Spanish Rule in Mexico** (3 min.) – Describes Cortés' conquest of the Aztec and how the establishment of Spanish rule changed the future of Mexico.

Discussion Questions

- Which explorers, in addition to Christopher Columbus, led European expeditions to the New World?
 - Before Europeans settled North America, did any cities exist there or did all the native tribes live in primitive encampments?
 - What happened when Europeans met and interacted with native North Americans? Who benefited and who was harmed by these interactions?
 - In what ways did European explorers like Hernán Cortés change the course of history for Mexico and all of the Americas?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Examine the personal and national goals of Cortés and other Spanish explorers who embarked on expeditions to the New World.
- Analyze the consequences of Cortés' conquest of Tenochtitlán for the Aztec and other Native Americans, for the future of Mexico, and for the future of other parts of the New World.

- Research and write a narrative from one of two perspectives: the viewpoint of a Native American witnessing the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in Mexico or the viewpoint of a Spanish explorer arriving in Mexico and meeting Native Americans.
- Create a map illustrating the early Spanish settlements in the Caribbean region, the Gulf of Mexico, and Mexico, noting the name of each settlement, the year it was founded, and the explorer who founded it. Include information regarding the Native American cultures of the region and the consequences for those cultures after Spanish colonization.

Materials

- *The Explorers: Hernán Cortés, Conqueror of Mexico* video
- Computer with Internet access
- Print resources about world geography and places in North America, central America, South America, and the Caribbean; print resources about the Aztec, Hernán Cortés, and pre-Columbian Mexico
- A large world map displayed where the entire class can see it
- Preprinted blank Western Hemisphere maps and maps of Spanish-speaking countries (downloadable from the Internet)
- Paper, markers, pens, and other supplies for creating reports and maps

Procedures

1. Before viewing the video, ask the class if they know why many places in Mexico, the Caribbean, Florida, and California have Spanish names. Point out Spain on the world map and note how far away it is from these Spanish-named places in the New World. Have the class study the Western Hemisphere portion of the map to discover place names of Spanish origin. Ask students if they can name some countries in the western hemisphere where most of the people speak the Spanish language.
2. View the video.
3. After viewing the video, lead a discussion about Christopher Columbus and the earliest Spanish explorers who paved the way for Hernán Cortés in the New World. Ask students to name some reasons the Spanish wanted to explore and settle lands so far from Spain. What dangers did the explorers face? Why do you think they considered their expeditions worth those risks? What did they expect to find, and what did they actually find? How did their arrival affect the lands and native people of the New World? What did the Spanish explorers think of the native tribes they encountered? What did the Native Americans think when they saw Spanish or other European explorers for the first time?
4. Ask students to research and write a narrative from one of two perspectives: from the viewpoint of a Native American who witnesses the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in Mexico or from the viewpoint of a Spanish explorer who arrives in Mexico and meets a tribe of Native Americans. Encourage students to include rich descriptive detail as well as the actions of all

characters involved in the scene, dialogue, and the thoughts and feelings of the point-of-view character.

5. Later in the week, have each student complete a copy of the blank Western Hemisphere map illustrating the early Spanish settlements in the Caribbean region, Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, and Mexico, noting the name of each settlement, the year it was founded, and the explorer who founded it. Have students include information regarding the Native American cultures of each region and the consequences of Spanish colonization for those cultures.
6. Students may begin their project research with the Web sites below, but encourage them to visit other sites, as well as the library.

Blank world Maps

www.geog.ucsb.edu/~vergeer/physgeog/world_map_blank.jpg

www.uwsp.edu/geo/faculty/ritter/geog101/maps/blank_world_map_lo_res.jpg

www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/teacher_lessons/worldmap1.jpg

www.anamp.org/nescp_curriculum/illustrations/map-world.jpg

Western Hemisphere map

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Blankmap-ao-090W-americas.png>

Spanish-speaking countries

www.hepm.org/map_spa_speak.htm

Ancient Mexico

www.ancientmexico.com/

Imperial city of the Aztec: Mexico-Tenochtitlan

www.common-place.org/vol-03/no-04/mexico-city/

Aztec culture

www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/mesoamerica/aztec.html

Indigenous peoples of the Americas: Latin America and the Caribbean

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classification_of_Native_Americans#Latin_America_and_the_Caribbean

Hernán Cortés on the Web

www.isidore-of-seville.com/cortes/

Hernán Cortés

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hernan_Cort%C3%A9s



Assessment

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

- 3 points: Students displayed an excellent understanding of the personal and national goals of Cortés and other Spanish explorers and recognized the consequences of Spanish conquest for the Aztec and other Native Americans, as well as for the future of Mexico and other parts of the New World; students wrote an interesting and well-researched narrative from the perspective of a Spanish explorer or Native American meeting the other for the first time; students created a richly-detailed map which accurately illustrated the locations of several early Spanish settlements in the Caribbean region, the Gulf of Mexico, and Mexico, noting all of the requested information on the map.
- 2 points: Students displayed some understanding of the personal and national goals of Cortés and other Spanish explorers and recognized some of the consequences of Spanish conquest for the Aztec and other Native Americans, as well as for the future of Mexico and other parts of the New World; students wrote an adequate narrative from the perspective of a Spanish explorer or Native American meeting the other for the first time; students created a map which sufficiently illustrated some early Spanish settlements in the Caribbean region, Gulf of Mexico, noting most of the requested information on the map.
- 1 point: Students displayed little understanding of the personal and national goals of Cortés and other Spanish explorers and did not recognize the consequences of Spanish conquest for the Aztec and other Native Americans, or for the future of Mexico and other parts of the New World; students wrote an inadequate narrative about the meeting of Spanish explorers and Native Americans with sparse details or did not write the account from the viewpoint of a character experiencing the meeting; students created an unsatisfactory map which did not adequately illustrate the location of early Spanish settlements in the Caribbean region, Gulf of Mexico, and Mexico, and did not include the requested information.

Vocabulary

Aztec

Definition: A large, powerful tribe of Native Americans who ruled an empire in central Mexico from the 14th century through the early 1500s

Context: The Aztec collected taxes from nearly five hundred towns in their Mexican empire.

Caribbean

Definition: The region off the coasts of Cuba, Central, and South American which includes the Caribbean Sea, its islands, and adjacent coastlines

Context: Spanish conquistadors claimed many Caribbean islands for the Spanish king.

conquistadors

Definition: Conquerors, especially the 16th-century Spanish explorers who fought and defeated Native American civilizations of Mexico, Central America, and Peru

Context: Hernán Cortés became one of the most famous Spanish conquistadors.

encomienda

Definition: A governmental system Hernán Cortés began in Mexico which regulated land and labor

Context: By design encomienda rewarded the Spanish conquerors while enslaving or indenturing the native people of Mexico.

Hispaniola

Definition: The Caribbean island on which Cortés fought battles with the Taíno native people

Context: Cortés conquered Hispaniola and received a large tract of land and numerous native slaves as a reward.

Quetzalcoatl

Definition: The plumed serpent god of the Aztec

Context: The Aztec emperor feared that Cortés was actually Quetzalcoatl in disguise coming to destroy the Aztec empire as a punishment for its practice of human sacrifice.

Taíno

Definition: A tribe of Native Americans that lived in Florida and on various Caribbean islands

Context: The Spanish forced the Taíno into slavery and many of this native tribe became ill from diseases that arrived with the foreign invaders.

Tenochtitlán

Definition: The capital city of Mexico's powerful Aztec Empire, located where Mexico City now stands

Context: Tenochtitlán stood on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco, linked to the mainland by elevated roadways.

Academic Standards

National Council for the Social Studies

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environment
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Power, Authority, and Governance

- Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- Global Connections

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K–12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This program addresses the following national standards:

- Geography – The World in Spatial Terms: Understands the characteristics and uses of maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technologies; Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment; Understands the characteristics and uses of spatial organization of Earth's surface.
 - Geography – Places and Regions: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place; Understands the concept of region; Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.
 - Geography – Human Systems: Understands the nature, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth's surface; Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics; Understands the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface; Understands the patterns of human settlement and their causes; Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of Earth's surface.
 - Geography – Environment and Society: Understands the changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution and importance of resources.
 - Geography – Uses of Geography: Understands how geography is used to interpret the past; Understands global development and environmental issues.
 - History – World History: Era 6 – Global Expansion and Encounter, 1450–1770: Understands how the transoceanic interlinking of all major regions of the world between 1450 and 1600 led to global transformations; Understands how European society experienced political, economic, and cultural transformations in an age of global intercommunication between 1450 and 1750; Understands major global trends from 1450 to 1770.
 - Language Arts – Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process; Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing; Gathers and uses information for research purposes.
 - Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.
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DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How to Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index – Here the video is divided into sections indicated by video thumbnail icons; brief descriptions are noted for each one. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Curriculum Units – These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

Standards Link – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

Teacher Resources – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. Hernán Cortés – An Introduction (1 min.)

Hernán Cortés explored various lands but became famous as the conqueror of Mexico. Discover how his conquests significantly furthered Spain's expansion into the New World.

II. Cortés – Background and Early Years (3 min.)

Cortés joined a Spanish expedition to the New World seeking wealth and power. Learn how previous European explorers and Cortés' early life paved the way for his later conquests.

III. Cortés Sails to Mexico (4 min.)

Cortés led an expedition from Cuba to Mexico in search of gold. Follow his journey along the Mexican coast, where he learned of the rich civilization of the Aztec.

IV. The Aztec (3 min.)

The Aztec had one of the largest and most advanced civilizations in the New World. Explore their capital city and learn why neighboring tribes resented and feared them.

V. Cortés Meets the Aztec (4 min.)

Cortés and his soldiers first met the Aztec in peace. Investigate why the Spaniards decided to attack and how their expedition managed to conquer such a vast empire.

VI. The Establishment of Spanish Rule in Mexico (3 min.)

The Spanish forced the conquered Aztec to dismantle Tenochtitlán and build a new, European-style city. Determine how the establishment of Spanish rule changed the future of Mexico.

Curriculum Units

1. Paving the Way for Cortés

Pre-viewing question

Q: What famous European explorer blazed the path to the New World and sparked exploration there for Cortés and others?

A: Christopher Columbus.

Post-viewing question

Q: What Spanish explorer gave Cortés opportunities in the New World and made him mayor of the Cuban settlement of Santiago?

A: Diego Velázquez.

2. Slave Labor

Pre-viewing question

Q: How did the Spanish build settlements and cities in the New World?

A: They conquered and enslaved the native people and forced them to do the hard labor of building settlements and cities.

Post-viewing question

Q: Why did the Spanish begin to import African slaves as well as using the Native American slaves to build their settlements?

A: The natives of the New World had no immunity to diseases from Europe and often whole tribes would die after contact with the Europeans.

3. Early Spanish Settlements

Pre-viewing question

Q: Early Spanish settlements dotted a region connected by which two bodies of water?

A: The Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico.



Post-viewing question

Q: Name four New World places the Spanish had already explored before Cortés took an expedition to Mexico.

A: Hispaniola, Cuba, Panama, and the Yucatan Peninsula.

4. Spanish Introductions to the New World

Pre-viewing question

Q: What advantages do you think the Spanish had over Native American tribes that allowed the Spanish to conquer them?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Name some things the Spanish first introduced to the New World.

A: Horses, cannons and other weapons made of steel, Christianity, large sailing vessels, smallpox, and other European diseases.

5. The Aztec and Their Capital City

Pre-viewing question

Q: Who were the Aztec?

A: They were a powerful, culturally advanced tribe of Native Americans who ruled a large empire in what is now Mexico.

Post-viewing question

Q: What large modern city now sits where the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlán once existed?

A: Mexico City, the capital city of Mexico.