



# **The Conquest of the Aztec Civilization**

**Denver Public Schools**

**In partnership with Metropolitan State College of Denver**

**El Alma de la Raza Project**



# The Conquest of the Aztec Civilization

By Daniel Villegas

Grades 9–12

Implementation Time  
for Unit of Study: 5 weeks

## Denver Public Schools

El Alma de la Raza Curriculum  
and Teacher Training Program

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# The Conquest of the Aztec Civilization

## Unit Concepts

- Spanish exploration of Mexico
- Languages of the conquest
- Cortes' journey into Mexico
- The Aztec way of life
- Allies of the Spanish
- Destruction of a civilization
- A new race begins

## Standards Addressed by this Unit

### Reading and Writing

Students read and understand a variety of material. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

### History

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry. (H2)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

### Geography

Students know how to use and construct maps and other geographic tools to locate and derive information about people, places, and environments. (G1)

## Introduction

On August 13, 1521, Hernando Cortes ended his final assault on the Aztec Indians. The great Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, was in ruins and the once proud and strong Aztec tribe was no more. This came to be because of a series of disastrous mistakes and oversights by the Aztec people and especially their leader, Moctezuma II.

Hernan Cortes began his journey of conquest in Cuba, where he was given the charge to explore the country of Mexico and to find gold. Slightly before his departure, the governor of Cuba rescinded Cortes' journey and requested that he return to Havana. Cortes knew that he would have no other chance to make such a voyage, so he quickly gathered the sailors and soldiers he needed and left for the coast of Mexico.

The conquest of Mexico is one of the most significant and important events in the Western Hemisphere. Not only was one of the greatest Indian civilizations left in ruins, but the Spanish took control of Middle America. Also, the interaction between the Spanish and the Aztecs created a new race, the Mestizo — the Mexican of today.

As in any historical unit of study, several different sources were used, therefore some dates or sequence of events may vary. Keep this in mind when assessing student work.

## Implementation Guidelines

This unit has been designed to present a detailed look of the conquest of Mexico, the single most significant and yet tragic event in Western Hemisphere history. This class can be taught in a variety of different high school classes, including Ethnic studies, American History, Hispanic/Chicano/Latino history, and Western Hemisphere history.

## Instructional Materials and Resources

*Broken Spears* by Miguel L. Portilla

*The Conquest of New Spain* by Bernal Diaz

*500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs* (video) produced and directed by Jack Leustig

## Lesson Summary

Lesson 1	The Geography of the Conquest ..... 4 This lesson will introduce the student to the story and the geography of the conquest. Included in this lesson is a map activity, which will help the students learn the geography needed for this unit. The students will watch a video to familiarize themselves with the events leading up to and the conquest itself.
Lesson 2	Spanish Exploration into Mexico ..... 15 This lesson will study the first Spanish explorers and where they traveled as they explored Mexico.
Lesson 3	Cortes: From Cuba to Mexico ..... 18 This lesson will look at the decision made by Deigo Velasquez to appoint a Captain General. It will also examine Cortes' two key acquisitions, Geronimo de Aguilar and La Malinche.
Lesson 4	The Landing at Veracruz and the Journey Inland ..... 21 At the Indians first encounter with Cortes, what made an impression? This lesson will also look at the alliances Cortes made and the battles he fought to get to Tenochtitlan and, more importantly, the alliances formed with the Tlaxcalan and other Indian tribes.
Lesson 5	The Spaniards in Tenochtitlan ..... 25 This lesson looks at the events involved with the Spanish in Tenochtitlan, including the holding of Moctezuma against his will and the defeat of Panfilo de Narvaez.
Lesson 6	Regrouping and the Destruction of Tenochtitlan ..... 30 In this lesson students will compare and contrast two accounts of the conquest, each demonstrating a different viewpoint, one from the Spanish perspective and one from the Aztec perspective.

## LESSON 1: The Geography of the Conquest

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of material. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events, and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

Students know how to use and construct maps and other geographic tools to locate and derive information about people, places, and environments. (G1)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students use information from their reading to increase vocabulary and language usage.

Students will expand vocabulary development using a variety of methods.

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes.

Students will know the general chronological order of events and people in history.

Students use appropriate traditional and electronic technologies in a variety of formats to extend and enhance learning of historical facts and concepts.

Students know how to use maps and other geographic tools to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will use classroom resources to become familiar with the geography of the Conquest.

Students will become familiar with the story of the conquest of Mexico by watching a video.

#### SPECIFICS

The Aztecs called themselves the Mechica (Mexico). Their homeland was known as Aztlan, though no one has ever been able to verify the exact location of Aztlan, it is believed to be northwest of Mexico City. The wandered into the Valley of Mexico in 1276, and because they were a nomadic tribe, they were quickly subjugated by the Toltecs under the leadership of Culhuacan. Though they continued to serve as vassals to Culhuacan, two things occurred. First, they became known as fierce mercenaries throughout the valley and were used as such. Second, they found the homeland they had been searching for. According to Mechica legend, they would know when they found their homeland when they came upon an eagle perched on a cactus eating a serpent (snake). The Mechicas came upon the eagle, cactus and snake on the marshy shores of Lake Texcoco. Here in this area that they began to build their great city of Tenochtitlan.

## What will be done to help students learn this?

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Map making

Read alouds

Cooperative groups

Note taking

Video watching

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Make sure classroom resources are available for this lesson, especially atlases and a roller-type map of Mexico or the Western Hemisphere. Write down the vocabulary and identification terms on the board. Make copies of the video worksheet and map requirements handout.

### PRETEACHING

Many students may come to your class with limited or no map skills. Take the opportunity to strengthen or review geography concepts, focusing specifically on map skills. Review the following geography map terms:

**Directional arrows** — also known as a compass rose, these arrows and letters show the reader of the map the directions of North, South, East and West on a particular map.

**Map legend** — a map legend defines the various symbols and abbreviations on a map.

**Scale** — A scale is a unit of measure located within the map legend, the scale demonstrates measurement on a map to what it would be in real life standards. An example is that on a map, one inch may represent 300 actual miles.

**Land elevation** — the height of the land above sea level.

**Physical map** — This type of map represents land elevations, water depths and major physical features of the land like mountain ranges, lakes and desserts.

**Political map** — This type of map uses color to differentiate countries, states, provinces, and territories. In addition, cities are represented using different symbols.

**Thematic map** — This type of map focuses on a specific theme such as temperature, regional climate, population density, distribution of resources, etc. Color is used to represent specific information.

### ACTIVITIES

**TO THE TEACHER:** Use the *500 Nations* video to introduce students to the Aztec people and the story of the conquest. Require students to take notes on the video so that they can answer the worksheet following the video. Tell the students to write down the vocabulary and identification terms so they can work on them in groups of two or three once they complete their video worksheets.

Review basic map terms with students. Pass out the Map Requirements handout. Instruct students they will be constructing two different maps.

For Map #1, students will work individually using classroom atlases, the Internet or textbooks to draw a freehand map. The map should include the elements listed on the Map Requirements handout, as well as a legend and directional arrows.

For Map #2, students will work in groups using the maps in the books *The Broken Spears* (Portilla) and *The Conquest of New Spain* (Diaz) to draw a freehand map identifying the cities and lakes required. This map will be drawn on butcher paper in a format large enough for the class to see.

TO THE STUDENT: Take notes on the *500 Nations* video. Your notes will help you organize your thoughts in answering the worksheet following the video. Get into groups of three or four students and find definitions for the vocabulary your teacher has put on the board. Be prepared to discuss them in class.

Using class resources you are to draw two different maps:

For Map #1 you will be working alone. This will be a general map of Mexico. You are to draw the map (freehand) and include the elements listed on the handout. This map can be drawn on plain paper. Make sure your map is complete and well-constructed. Use colored pencils or markers so it resembles a political map.

For Map #2 you are to work in groups of two or three. This map is more specific to the area immediately around Tenochtitlan. This map is more complicated and should be done on a large sheet of butcher paper. The requirements for this map are listed on the handout. Refer to the maps in *The Broken Spears* and *The Conquest of New Spain* to help you complete your map. You should focus on providing a complete, well-constructed map. It should be large and clear so it can easily be seen in front of the class.

#### VOCABULARY

Allies

Aqueduct

Causeway

Chinampas

Maiz

Small Pox

#### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs* (video)

*The Broken Spears*

*The Conquest of New Spain*

drawing paper

colored pencils

markers

atlases

roller-type map

butcher paper

**ASSESSMENT**

This lesson has several activities that can be used as a grading assessment. To evaluate the maps use the rubric below.

**Map 1 — Assessment**

<u>Rubric Score</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	Map should include all the required elements as laid out on the requirement handout. The map should be neat in appearance and indicative of the grade level of the student. The map should also be made in a political style so that color is used to separate the various sections listed.
3 .....	Map is missing two of the required elements as listed on the requirement handout. The map should be neat in appearance and indicative of the grade level of the student. The map should be made in a political style so that color is used to separate the various sections listed.
2 .....	Map is missing five of the required elements as listed on the map requirement handout. The map is not colored in a political style and shows no particular separation of the required sections. This map could be considered below grade-level work.
1 .....	Map is missing more than five of the required elements listed in the requirement handout. The map is not colored, and is definitely below grade-level work. The teacher should ask the student to do the work over.

**Map 2 — Assessment**

The required cities and bodies of water are a combination from the maps in *The Broken Spears* and *The Conquest of New Spain*. There is no sample map to assist you (the teacher) in grading. Please associate yourself with both maps so that you can assist the students with this project.

<u>Rubric Score</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	Required lakes and at least 20 cities in the proximity of Tenochtitlan are identified. The map is indicative of positive group work, and good effort.
3 .....	Required lakes and at least 17 of the required cities and lakes, in the proximity of Tenochtitlan are identified. The map is indicative of positive group work and effort.
2 .....	Required lakes and at least 14 of the required cities and lakes in the proximity of Tenochtitlan are identified. The map is average at best; it meets the requirements, but the group has not tried to make it look superior or better than others in the class.
1 .....	The map does not contain the required lakes and 13 or fewer of the required cities. It is apparent the group has not paid attention to detail and has submitted a piece of work below grade-level standards.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

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## 500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs

Answer the following questions for the video *500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs*.

**PART I** Matching: Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.

- |           |   |                     |
|-----------|---|---------------------|
| 1. _____  | The Aztecs called themselves this name.   | A. 1 Reed           |
| 2. _____  | The capital city of the Aztecs.   | B. Aztlan           |
| 3. _____  | The Spanish arrived in Mexico during this calendar year.                          | C. Small Pox        |
| 4. _____  | The Aztecs used these to guide them.  | D. Tenochtitlan     |
| 5. _____  | At the height of the Aztec power, Moctezuma ruled over how many people?           | E. 6,000            |
| 6. _____  | The Aztecs became descendants of the...   | F. Mexica (Mechica) |
| 7. _____  | The mythical home of the Aztecs was...  | G. Signs and dreams |
| 8. _____  | The Aztecs were valued in the valley of Mexico for their skills as .....          | H. Warriors         |
| 9. _____  | The city-state of Tlaxcala provided how many troops for fighting the Aztecs?      | I. 10 million       |
| 10. _____ | The disease that many Aztecs died from that was brought on by the Spanish was ... | J. Toltecs          |

**PART II** Short answer: Write answers for the following questions in complete sentences.

You can use another sheet of paper and write on the back of the worksheet as well.

11. Explain why Cortes decided to sink his ships.

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12. When the Spanish returned for the final siege on Tenochtitlan after the Noche Triste, they had 75,000 Indian allies with them. What kind of message could be understood by this about the Aztecs and their methods of conquest and tribute?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

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## 500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs

13. How did the Aztecs go from being a nomadic tribe to the most powerful empire in Mexico? Be as detailed as possible in your response.

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14. With such few numbers of troops, and the Aztecs numbering several hundred thousand, how did Cortes and his men succeed in the conquest of the Aztecs? (Be sure to discuss alliances, weaponry, strategy, and any other factors that may be relevant.)

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15. When the Spanish left the Imperial temple and were leaving the city on the night known as La Noche Triste, more than three-fourths of the soldiers lost their lives in their escape. What factors led to such an enormous number of soldiers dying?

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16. How might the legend of Quetzalcoatl have added to the reluctance by Moctezuma in attacking and destroying the small Spanish army?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

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## 500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs

17. What was the “cycle of power” discussed in the movie, and how did it affect the Aztecs in their rise to power?

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18. The city of Tenochtitlan was enormous in size and efficient in its development of canals, causeways and aqueducts. In a city of its size, how did the canals, causeways and aqueducts initially benefit and eventually weaken the Aztec population in Tenochtitlan?

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19. The Aztecs sacrificed many people. What was their purpose and belief in this? Also, Who were the people who were sacrificed?

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## TEACHER'S COPY

### 500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs Answer sheet

#### PART I

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. J  |
| 2. D | 7. B  |
| 3. A | 8. H  |
| 4. G | 9. E  |
| 5. I | 10. C |

**PART II** In grading the short answer section, the basic information that should be included in each answer is listed. Remember, some students may have different answers that have validity to them — provide for these allowances.

**11. Explain why Cortes decided to sink his ships.**

- by sinking his ships no one would be able to return to Cuba, thus continuing the conquest was the only option.
- he was then able to make a town in Mexico, which would release the obligations to Governor Diego Velasquez (revisit this).

**12. When the Spanish returned for the final siege on Tenochtitlan after the Noche Triste, they had 75,000 Indian allies with them. What kind of message could be understood by this about the Aztecs and their methods of conquest and tribute?**

- excessive tributes enforced upon them by the Aztecs;
- a desire to end the violent rule of the Aztecs and become autonomous; and
- sacrificial victims came from conquered tribes.

**13. How did the Aztecs go from becoming the nomadic tribe from the east to the most powerful empire in Mexico? Be as detailed as possible in your response.**

- they were fearless and had great warrior skills;
- the development of Tenochtitlan provided stability for the Aztecs;
- by marrying into Toltec blood lines, they achieved a certain degree of legitimacy among the other Indians within the valley of Mexico;
- they were able to maneuver themselves into a strong position so that when war broke out in the valley again, they would be the ones to benefit the most with their alliances and sheer strength; and
- following the outbreak of war the Aztecs took control of the valley and quickly subjugated the tribes that refused to ally themselves or follow the Aztecs.

## TEACHER'S COPY

### 500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs Answer sheet (cont.)

**14. With such few numbers of troops, and the Aztecs numbering several hundred thousand, how did Cortes and his men succeed in the conquest of the Aztecs? (Be sure to discuss alliances, weaponry, strategy, and other factors that may be relevant.)**

- reinforcements from Cuba;
- Indian alliances, especially with Tlaxcala, sworn enemies of the Aztecs;
- well-trained troops;
- cannons, rifles and metal armor;
- knowledge to build other military weapons, such as the catapult;
- the use of Aztec abuses;
- horses, which the Indians had never seen before, provided mobility to the Spanish attack and struck fear in the Indians; and
- the belief by many Aztecs, especially Moctezuma, that Cortes was Quetzalcoatl a God returning to destroy the Aztecs.

**15. When the Spanish left the Imperial temple and were leaving the city on the night known as La Noche Triste, more than three-fourths of the soldiers lost their lives in their escape. What factors led to such an enormous number of soldiers dying?**

- the sheer number of Aztec warriors;
- the Aztecs attacking from behind the Spanish on the causeway and on the sides with canoes, and in front of them from the outer banks of Tenochtitlan;
- soldiers being weighed down/slowed down by the gold they were carrying;
- drowning when they fell in the water because of the weight of the gold;
- the width of the causeway restricted the advancement of the troops out of the city; and
- the bridges along the causeways had been taken apart to maneuver in between the causeway sections. The Spanish had to get in the water to get to the other side of the causeway, which left them vulnerable.

**16. How might the legend of Quetzalcoatl have added to the reluctance by Moctezuma in attacking and destroying the small Spanish army?**

The year 1519 coincided directly with the Aztec year 1 Reed on the Aztec calendar. According to the Aztec legend, the god Quetzalcoatl was to return and destroy the Aztecs during this year. Moctezuma believed that Cortes was Quetzalcoatl, so he felt that he could persuade him not to destroy the Aztecs.

## TEACHER'S COPY

### 500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs Answer sheet (cont.)

- 17. The city of Tenochtitlan was enormous in size and efficient in its development of canals, causeways and aqueducts. In a city of its size, how did the canals, causeways and aqueducts initially benefit and eventually weaken the Aztec population?**

Initially, this system of causeways, canals and aqueducts worked with great efficiency for the Aztecs. Trade, transportation, and communication flowed throughout the city because of its canal system. The three causeways were very effective in controlling who came in the city for trade or other business. The causeways made overall travel in and out of the city easy by raising the road above the swampy lake-surface of Lake Texcoco. Militarily, it would have been difficult to attack the city because the width and length of the causeways put the attackers in a defenseless position and limit the number of soldiers that could directly attack. Yet, Cortes was successful in surrounding the city by the lake and on the land, restricting escape for the Aztecs. As Cortes eventually entered the city, he would take control of one section of the city, fill the next canal with the rubble from the buildings and go on to the next section of the city. He did this till the city was captured.

The aqueduct brought fresh water into the city, which was needed by its large population. However, with return of the Spanish, all the fresh water entering the city was cut off. Cortes was winning a mental war by depriving the citizens of food and fresh water.

## Map Requirements

### MAP #1

**INSTRUCTIONS:** For Map #1 you will be working alone. This will be a general map of Mexico. You are to draw the map (freehand) and include the elements listed below. This map can be drawn on plain paper. Make sure your map is complete and well-constructed. Use colored pencils or markers so it resembles a political map.

**YOUR MAP MUST INCLUDE:**

**1. Outline of Mexico**

**2. Countries, Cities, Islands, Regions:**

- Mexico
- Cuba
- Cozumel
- Havana
- Tenochtitlan

**3. Bodies of Water:**

- Pacific Ocean
- Caribbean Sea
- Gulf of Mexico
- Gulf of Campeche
- Gulf of Tehuantepec
- Gulf of California

### MAP #2

**INSTRUCTIONS:** For Map #2 you are to work in groups of two or three. This map is more specific to the area immediately around Tenochtitlan. This map is more complicated and should be done on a large sheet of butcher paper. The requirements for this map are listed below. Refer to the maps in *The Broken Spears* and *The Conquest of New Spain* to help you complete your map. You should focus on providing a complete, well-constructed map. It should be large and clear so it can easily be seen in front of the class.

**YOUR MAP MUST INCLUDE:**

Lake Texcoco and the cities surrounding it. Also identify the location of the causeways leading to Tenochtitlan and each city that they connect to.

**1. Cities**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atzacualco     | <input type="checkbox"/> Tacuba (Tlacopan)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chalco         | <input type="checkbox"/> Tacubaya           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chapultepec    | <input type="checkbox"/> Tasquena           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chimalhuacan   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenayuca           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Churubusco     | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenochtitlan       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coyoacan       | <input type="checkbox"/> Tepepolco          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coyotepec      | <input type="checkbox"/> Tepaca (Tepeyacac) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cuitlahuac     | <input type="checkbox"/> Texcoco            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ecatpec        | <input type="checkbox"/> Tizapan            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Itzapalapa     | <input type="checkbox"/> Tlalpan            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mexicanltzingo | <input type="checkbox"/> Tlateloco          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixcoac        | <input type="checkbox"/> Xochimilco         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixquic        |   |

**2. Bodies of Water**

- Lake Texcoco
- Lake Chalco
- Lake Xaltocan
- Lake Xochimilco
- Lake Zumpango

## LESSON 2:

# Spanish Exploration of Mexico prior to Cortes

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry. (H2)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will select relevant material for reading, writing, and speaking purposes.

Students will paraphrase, summarize, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Students will use information to produce a quality product in an appropriate format.

Students will read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar.

Students know the general chronological order of events and people in history.

Students use chronology to present historical events and people.

Students use appropriate traditional and electronic technologies in a variety of formats to extend and enhance learning of historical facts and concepts.

Students use appropriate technologies to access, process, and communicate information relevant to history.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will become familiar with the explorers of Mexico, prior to the conquest.

Students will use maps and other reference materials to become familiar with the voyages.

#### SPECIFICS

The Conquest of Mexico did not begin with Hernan Cortes in 1519; rather it began with a slave expedition to the Bahaman Islands. According to William Prescott, author of *The Conquest of Mexico* (1843); on February 8, 1517, Hernandez de Cordova, sailed with three vessels on an expedition to one of the neighboring Bahaman Islands in search of Indian slaves. The expedition endured three weeks of gales that took them in a westernly direction, eventually landing them on the Yucatan Peninsula in the eastern part Mexico. Cordova and his men journeyed inland to investigate and survey the peninsula, focusing on its native population and abundance of gold. Prescott goes on to state that Cordova was truly amazed by the higher cultivation of the soil, and with the delicate texture of the cotton garments and gold ornaments of the natives. In fact, everything he noted was indicative of a civilization far superior to any thing he had before witnessed in the New World. As he continued his expeditions, he met increasing resistance from the native population, many of his men, including himself, suffered from multiple wounds from these violent encounters. Upon his

return to Cuba, the news of his discoveries spread quickly throughout the island, especially with the mention of gold. Diego Velasquez, the governor of Cuba, made quick effort to outfit a new expedition to Mexico, he appointed his nephew Juan de Grijalva to lead this effort. On May 1, 1518, Grijalva left the port San Jago de Cuba with four ships. Because of the uncharted waters, Grijalva landed farther south on the Yucatan peninsula than Cordova had. In fact he landed on the island of Cozumel. As he and his men left the ships to explore the land he encountered several Indian villages. He too noted the highly civilized aspects of the Indians on the island and took particular interest in the detailed architecture of the buildings and temples. Grijalva also encountered violent resistance from various tribes where he landed. Yet, he and his men suffered less than Cordova because he was prepared to encounter heavy resistance from the various tribes because of the reports from Cordova. Grijalva was successful in that he was able to meet his objectives. He met with a cacique, similar to a provincial or regional chief, who was a representative of the Aztec empire. In this meeting both Grijalva and the cacique exchanged information and gifts. Grijalva offered a few trinkets of inconsequential items, whereas the cacique in return offered gold and jewels indicative of a high degree of workmanship. After this friendly meeting, Grijalva continued up the coast of Mexico to near present-day Veracruz. Prior to his arrival in Veracruz, he dispatched one of the ships to return to Cuba, under the command of Pedro de Alvarado. With the arrival of Alvarado and the news of the rich and powerful empire, Governor Velasquez could barely contain himself with excitement. He immediately made plans for another expedition. This expedition, however, had a different goal in mind. Prescott (1843) states that he resolved to send out another armament on a sufficient scale to insure the subjugation of the country. He would eventually appoint Hernan Cortes to achieve this goal.

## **What will be done to help students learn this?**

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group activities

Researching

Presentation

Small group work

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

The teacher needs to ensure that students have resource books, Internet access, and additional research texts to thoroughly research these two discoverers.

### ACTIVITIES

**TO THE TEACHER:** Split students into two groups. Each group will be assigned one of the two early discoverers; Hernandez de Cordova and Juan de Grijalva. Make sure the class books are available for use. Students should use additional resources, including the Internet and library.

**TO THE STUDENT:** The teacher will split the class in two. Each group will be assigned either Hernandez de Cordova or Juan de Grijalva. Both of these individuals are very important to the history of the conquest. The assignment is to research these two individuals and their historical contribution to the conquest. Answer at least the following questions. How did they arrive in Mexico? Was there anything special about their arrival? What did they discover? Did they interact with the Indians? If they did, was this a positive or negative meeting? What made this person's voyage so important to the conquest and Spanish discovery? Include a map of their voyage, created on butcher paper so that it can be displayed in the front of the class.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

Butcher paper

*Broken Spears*

*The Conquest of New Spain*

*The Conquest of Mexico*

Encyclopedias

Resource books

Internet

ASSESSMENT

Following student research and fact gathering, they are to give a detailed class presentation showing the in-depth research they have done. Assess the students on a 5-point rubric per question. In the presentation, how thoroughly were the following questions addressed?

1. How did they arrive in Mexico? Was there anything special about their arrival?

Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

2. What did they discover?

Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

3. Did they interact with the Indians?

Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

4. If they did, was this a positive or negative meeting?

Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

5. What made this person's voyage so important to the conquest and Spanish discovery?

Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

6. Was the map detailed?

Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

Allow for extra consideration for groups that provide outlines, overheads, maps and any other visual that may enhance the presentation.

Grading Scale — each person of the group should receive the same grade for the presentation unless they were blatantly uncooperative or unproductive for this group project.

Points	Grade
40-36 .....	A
35-31 .....	B
30-26 .....	C
25-20 .....	D
19 or below .....	F

## LESSON 3: Cortes: From Cuba to Mexico

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process, and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students will adjust reading strategies for a variety of purposes.

Students will write and speak for a variety of purposes.

Students will prepare written and oral presentations using strategies.

Students will read literature to understand places, people, events and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar.

#### OBJECTIVE

The students will understand how Hernan Cortes' riches, family relations and military experience assist him in being appointed to conquer Mexico.

Students will become familiar with Geronimo de Aguilar and his importance to the expedition.

Students will become familiar La Malinche, also known as Doña Marina, and why she was one of the keys to Cortes' success against the Aztecs.

#### SPECIFICS

As Juan de Grijalva's treasure ship arrived in Cuba, excitement ran over the island. The gold and precious items that returned on the ship struck a fever — a gold fever — among the island's residents. Diego Velasquez quickly announced a new voyage was to be sent to the shores of Mexico. The objective was to make the country part of the Spanish Empire, convert the Indians to Christianity and to claim all the gold for Velasquez, minus the royal fifth due to the king of Spain. Velasquez' struggle lay in who would he appoint to lead this effort. This man would have to be strong, with leadership ability, a strong faith, and an overall commitment to complete the mission. Many men were vying for the job, however Hernan Cortes had manipulated his position as a relative through marriage, and he also was able to make a secret agreement between Velasquez' secretary that the royal accountant to Cuba influence Velasquez. Velasquez appointed Cortes as the Captain-General of the fleet. The fleet eventually arrived on the island of Cozumel, just east of mainland Mexico. Though the natives on the island first hid from the Spaniards, they were eventually convinced to leave the forest and meet with Cortes. Through various discussions, it was mentioned that there may be captured Spaniards on the mainland. Cortes dispatched two

small boats with some soldiers and a letter to any of the Indians requesting the release of any Spaniards held against their will and offering to pay a ransom for their freedom. Within two days time a message was returned to Cortes that a Spaniard by the name of Geronimo de Aguilar would soon join them after being released from his captors. Aguilar became of critical importance to Cortes. He had been shipwrecked eight years before and forced into slavery. Though he had struggled for many of those years, he was able to learn the language of the Indians (Maya). Being able to communicate with the natives of the area was crucial to Cortes' success. After leaving Cozumel, Cortes' fleet continued up the eastern coast of Mexico. Cortes battled with thousands of Indians along the coast, but Cortes' armor, cannons, and horses proved superior to the manpower of the Indians and they were defeated. When Cortes arrived in the area now known as Tabasco, he fought with the Indians and quickly defeated them. When peace was made, the Caciques offered patronage to Cortes in the form of food, gifts and women. Cortes tried to thank the Caciques but they did not understand the translation by Aguilar. Their language was not the same as Maya. However, one of the women that was given as a gift, named Doña Marina, understood the language spoken by Aguilar and spoke to the Caciques. Doña Marina happened to be an Aztec princess who, through a series of events, became a slave to the Tabascan Indians. Being an Aztec princess meant that she was fluent in the language of the Aztecs known as Nahuatl, as well as the Tabascan and Mayan languages. Because of her ability to speak these languages and the ability of Aguilar to speak Castillian (Spanish) and Maya, Cortes would now be able to communicate with all the various tribes from Tabasco to Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztecs. It proved later that Marina became the ultimate ally, often tipping off Cortes of surprise attacks and plots to kill him, and though she had been given to one of Cortes' captains, Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero, she bore Cortes a son named Don Martin Cortes. Thus, being the first child of a new Mexican race.

## What will be done to help students learn this?

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Small group discussion

Small group reading

Summarizing

Story boards

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Students will be working in small groups to read about Cortes' voyage from Cuba to Mexico and the important find in Geronimo de Aguilar and Doña Marina. Students will be working in groups to discuss this voyage and their findings. Make sure that each small group has several sheets of butcher paper to make comments about the voyage and the translators.

### ACTIVITIES

**TO THE TEACHER:** Organize the students into small groups of four or five. They are to read pages 44-87 in *The Conquest of New Spain*. Afterwards, students will write comments on the butcher paper about the voyage and both of the translators, Geronimo de Aguilar and Doña Marina. After the discussion, the students will create a storyboard of the events they read about. This storyboard will illustrate the events in a pictorial sequence, from Diego Velasquez' struggle to appoint Cortes as Captain General, to the meeting of Cortes, the Tabascans and Doña Marina. Then they will be preparing to display and discuss this with the class.

TO THE STUDENT: The teacher will place you into small groups. Read pages 44-87 in the book *The Conquest of New Spain*. You can read this section individually or as a group. You should take notes as you read to remember the important facts of events. When the reading is done, begin to outline and discuss the readings, making the group notes on a several sheets of butcher paper. Focus on several key events: the struggle for Velasquez to appoint a Captain General, the voyage to Cozumel, the arrival of Geronimo de Aguilar, the battles against the Indians and finally the acquisition of Doña Marina. After taking group notes you are to complete a storyboard on the history you just read. This storyboard should be drawn on butcher paper so that it will be large enough to share with the class. Draw the pictures and provide a brief summary of the event underneath the picture. Remember that this is a summary, not a long narrative. Be as descriptive as possible and use a lot of butcher paper to properly provide a historical summary. You will be evaluated on your group participation, your final pictorial presentation and overall thoroughness of the content.

RESOURCE/MATERIALS

Butcher paper

Markers

Colored pencils

*The Conquest of New Spain*

ASSESSMENT

Evaluate the students on three things, group participation, pictorial presentation and thoroughness of content in the presentation.

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	Each student participated in the group by reading the section and participation in group discussion. The finished storyboards are of superior quality and provide a good summary of each picture drawn. The content of presentation and historical summary are very thorough.
3 .....	Each student participated in the group by reading the section and participation in group discussion. The finished story boards are complete, and good, but not of superior quality. The summaries are short and not very specific to the events drawn. The overall content and historical summary is good, but may be missing some critical events .
2 .....	One or two of the students did not participate in the reading or group discussion. Many of the storyboards do not contain a summary to the event and the overall historical content is fair but missing critical aspects of history.
1 .....	The overall group was not productive. One or two members may have worked diligently, so they should receive additional points. The storyboards have been started, yet the majority of the historical summary has not been addressed The summaries may not be included with the storyboard pictures. The overall content is very vague and does not provide a specific summary of events.

## LESSON 4:

# The Landing at Veracruz and the Journey inland

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students read to locate, select, and make use of a relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry. (H2)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process, and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students will adjust reading strategies for a variety of purposes.

Students will write and speak for a variety of purposes.

Students will select relevant material for reading, writing, and speaking purposes.

Students will paraphrase, summarize, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Students will use information to produce a quality product in an appropriate format.

Students will read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar.

Students know the general chronological order of events and people in history.

Students use chronology to organize historical events and people.

Students use chronology to present historical events and people.

Students know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of historical information.

Students use appropriate technologies to access, process, and communicate information relevant to history

#### OBJECTIVES

The students will read and learn about the crucial part of the conquest in which Cortes defeats tribes not loyal to the Aztecs and they become his allies, significantly raising the number of troops to oppose the Aztecs.

The students will learn about how the harsh tributes instituted on the subjugated tribes under the Aztec worked against them.

Students will learn the chronology that takes the Spanish to the outskirts of Tenochtitlan.

### SPECIFICS

After leaving the Tabascan area of Mexico, Cortes and his fleet headed toward what is now Veracruz. Upon the arrival of all the ships in the fleet, Cortes ordered the troops to disembark. Cortes had secret plans. He had no intention of returning to Cuba and sharing the wealth with Diego Velasquez. Instead, he established a town and called it La Villa Rica de la Veracruz. By establishing this town, Cortes added legitimacy to the changing of his mission. No longer was he to serve Diego Velasquez to trade and explore with the natives of Mexico, Cortes changed the focus of his expedition to conquer and colonize for the king of Spain.

Cortes met with representatives from the Aztecs at Veracruz. They brought him gifts of gold, fine feathers, and various artworks in hopes of deterring his advance to their capital Tenochtitlan. However, Moctezuma's plan to appease him into leaving failed drastically. Cortes was more determined as ever to reach the city of Tenochtitlan. However judging from the information he received from the locals, this would be no easy task. He knew that along the way to Tenochtitlan he would have to play off the cruelty by the Aztecs. The Indians in the area were called the Cempoalans and they had just become part of the Aztec Empire. The tribute demanded upon them was heavy and they did not care for it. The Cempoalans leaders went to Cortes and proposed an alliance between them. They told Cortes all he wanted to hear about the Aztecs, their sheer numbers, great city and iron hand of control over their subjugated people. But aside from the gold, Cortes was shocked by the mention of sacrifice. Apparently, the Aztecs sacrificed countless victims to appease their gods. These victims were often captured or easily taken from the tribes under their control. Cortes had heard of this sacrificing, but became even more sickened by the news being told to them by the Cempoalan. As allies to the Spanish, the Cempoalan brought them to their capital city Xocotlan. There they were received with an almost parade-like atmosphere. After a short stay in Xocotlan, Cortes and his men started their journey to Tenochtitlan once again, however this time they were joined by warriors and craftsmen of the Cempoalans. They made their way toward Tlaxcala. The Tlaxcalan Indians were sworn enemies of the Aztecs and were one of only a handful of tribes that were able to resist the power of the Aztecs. However, they were not keen to the idea of becoming subjects to the Spanish, so they fought hard against Cortes. Up to 40,000 Tlaxcalan warriors battled with the Spanish. Though receiving many wounds, the Spanish withheld the attacks and eventually peace was declared. After taking time to heal their wounds, the Spanish left Tlaxcala with several thousand Tlaxcalan warriors at their side. With the allies they picked up, the Spanish had grown from a force of a mere 600 to thousands. The next town they were to encounter was Cholula. Cholula was a town under the Aztec rule and was expected to give a fight. Surprisingly, they welcomed the Spanish and their allies. However, this was a trick — they were ordered by the Aztecs to welcome Cortes, only to ambush him and his troops when the time was right. This plan could have had tragic effects for the Spanish if Doña Marina had not received warning from some of the women of the town and quickly alerted Cortes of the impending attack. Cortes and the allies planned an attack on the Cholulans. Because of the hatred among the Tlaxcalans for the Cholulans, once the attack began the fierceness came out and Cortes was unable to stop the Tlaxcalans. They turned the attack into a massacre, killing most of the Cholulans. After healing their wounds for a short time, the Spanish and their allies continued once again toward Tenochtitlan. They would receive no significant fighting on the way to Tenochtitlan since Moctezuma ordered that they not be attacked. They arrived at the outskirts of Tenochtitlan and were greeted by lords of the surrounding cities. Then came Moctezuma himself to meet Cortes and his men. He arrived, being carried on a litter made of gold and clothed in the finest of garments. Cortes and Moctezuma bowed to each other and Moctezuma asked them to enter his city.

## What will be done to help students learn this?

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Small group work

Discussion

Note taking

Group reading

Outlining

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

The students will need to have butcher paper, rulers, maps of Mexico, colored pencils, markers etc., to complete the assignment. Divide the class into small groups of four or five students.

### PRETEACHING

It is suggested that the teacher review the concept of a time line and its listing of chronological events. In this activity it may be difficult to find dates to the different events, but emphasize that if the events are listed in order that it will provide essentially a good time line.

### ACTIVITIES

**TO THE TEACHER:** Divide the class into groups of four or five students. The groups will read the following pages: *The Broken Spears*, chapters 2 through 6, pages 13-61; and *The Conquest of New Spain*, pages 88-215. You may want to suggest to the students to split the reading among them. They should take notes on the readings and focus on location, events, dates (if available), and key individuals. They will need this information to complete the time line assignment.

**TO THE STUDENT:** The teacher has already placed you in groups of four or five. You are assigned to read the following: *The Broken Spears*, chapters 2- through 6, pages 13-61; and *The Conquest of New Spain*, pages 88-215. You may want to split the readings up in the group. Take notes on the reading focusing on events, dates (if available), and key individuals.

After completing the readings from both books, you are assigned to compose a time line of events. Many of the events read in the books do not include a date but are written in chronological order. The time period covered should be from the landing of Cortes and his fleet at Veracruz to the meeting with Moctezuma. The time line should reflect events and perception from both books. This is important to remember because *The Broken Spears* book is written from accounts by the Aztecs who survived the conquest. Reflect their version of the history in the time line.

The second part of this lesson is to construct a detailed map of the travels of Cortes, from Veracruz to Tenochtitlan. This map should reflect the major cities he would have encountered and physical features such as mountain ranges and rivers. This map should be made on butcher paper and large enough to show the needed detail.

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*The Broken Spears*

*The Conquest of New Spain*

Butcher paper

Markers

Colored pencils

Map of Mexico

**ASSESSMENTS**

**Time line — Assessment**

The time line is difficult to evaluate on specific content. However, it is important that the time line reflect the major dates, locations, people and events that occurred between Veracruz and Tenochtitlan. To assess the time line use the basic rubric below.

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	The time line is well-drawn and provides detail in all the events listed in the reading text. The events shown on the time line present views from both texts providing perspective of the journey from the Aztec and Spaniards. The time line is representative of exceptional student work.
3 .....	The time line is well-drawn and provides detail in all the events listed in the reading text. The events shown on the time line do not show the perspective from both the Aztec and Spanish point of view. The time line is representative of good student work, yet it could be more specific or clear in the presentation of material.
2 .....	The time line is acceptable but could be drawn better. It may be difficult to read the information listed on the time line. The listed events show only the perspective of either the Aztec or the Spanish. The time line meets the minimum requirements, however it is evident the group could have produced better quality work.
1 .....	The time line is unacceptable. The information listed is vague and does not provide a summary of the information from the readings. The information listed is one-sided, representing the Aztec or Spanish. It is obvious the group could have exerted more effort to submit better quality work.

**Map — Assessment**

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	The map is very detailed and represents the locations, events and physical features from the readings. The map is large enough to be shown to the class. It is evident the group has included an exceptional amount of detail.
3 .....	The map is detailed but seems to lack either physical features or a few key events. The map is large enough to be shown to the class. It is evident the group has worked hard on the map, however may be missing a few minor details.
2 .....	The map lacks a lot of detail and several key events. The map is very small and when shown in front of the class, it is difficult to see any detail. It is evident that the group did not produce a map indicative of grade-level work.
1 .....	The map is vague and is missing most of the key events from the reading. The map is small and cannot be viewed for detail when shown in front of the class. The map is well below grade-level work.

## LESSON 5: The Spaniards in Tenochtitlan

### What will students be learning

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW 6)

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students will adjust reading strategies and resources.

Students will write and speak for a variety of purposes.

Students will recognize, understand, and use formal grammar in speaking and writing.

Students will apply formal usage in speaking and writing.

Students will use correct sentence structure in writing.

Students will demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Students will recognize and know when it is appropriate to use dialectical, idiomatic, and colloquial language, including awareness and appreciation of cultural and dialectic variance.

Students will recognize, express, and defend points of view orally and in writing.

Students will read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar.

Students will know the general chronological order of events and people in history.

Students use chronology to examine and explain historical relationships.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will study the occupation of Tenochtitlan by the Spanish.

Students will read about the interaction between Cortes and Moctezuma.

Students will read and understand why the Spanish held Moctezuma against his will.

Students will learn about the attempt by Diego Velasquez to regain control of the Spanish efforts in Mexico.

Students will learn about “La Noche Triste” and its importance to the conquest.

### SPECIFICS

As the Spanish soldiers neared the entry to Tenochtitlan, they were in awe. Standing before them was a city so big and so well-built that they could barely believe their eyes. Tenochtitlan had a very intricate system of causeways, bridges and canals, which allowed for ease and efficiency of transportation and exchange of goods, but also allowed for the easy defense of the city. Moctezuma welcomed the Spaniards into the city and offered them one of the palaces to stay in. Moctezuma provided them with servants to meet their every need.

Moctezuma could have ordered their death at any time, but believed the arrival of the Spanish, especially that of Cortes, was an omen. It was recorded in Aztec history that in the year 1-Reed, which happened to be 1519, the god Quetzalcoatl was going to return to destroy the Aztec Empire. That is why Moctezuma had sent gifts to the Spanish upon their arrival at Veracruz. He hoped it would pacify them and they would go away. However, they didn't and Moctezuma felt he had to show them respect when they arrived. The leaders of the surrounding towns advised Moctezuma to kill the outsiders, providing little belief that these men were Quetzalcoatl. Moctezuma refused to hear them and welcomed them anyway.

After a few days, Cortes ordered that Moctezuma be captured and brought back to the palace in which they were staying. Cortes felt that by holding Moctezuma, the rest of the Aztecs would be less likely to attack the Spaniards.

Back in Cuba, Governor Diego Velasquez was not pleased when word got back to him that Cortes had changed the focus of the expedition. Velasquez also knew that all the gold that was taken from the country would be Cortes', minus the royal fifth destined to return to Spain. Velasquez decided to take action. He dispatched a new fleet to arrest Cortes. This group was led by Panfilo de Narvaez and included 14 ships and some 1,400 men. After arriving at Veracruz, Narvaez and his men moved on to a city named Cempoala. There his men began receiving bribes influencing them to join Cortes rather than capture him. Narvaez was still determined to capture Cortes. Cortes implemented a surprise attack at night. Though heavily outnumbered, Cortes' was first able to capture Narvaez' artillery and eventually took control of the situation. The rest of the troops agreed to fight for Cortes. One important note is that among Narvaez' troops was a black slave who was suffering from small pox. This sickness would eventually topple the Aztec Empire.

While Cortes was dealing with Narvaez and his troops, problems arose at Tenochtitlan. When Cortes left the city he left Pedro de Alvarado in charge of the remaining troops.

The Aztecs gathered in the main temple for a religious celebration. Music began to play and warriors began to dance the Dance of the Serpents. As the dancing continued and the music got louder, Spaniards began to appear at all the entrances to the temple. On the order of Alvarado, the Spanish attacked the unarmed dancers, spectators and musicians. Guards were left at the entrances so that no one could escape. All the Aztecs in the Main temple were massacred. Alvarado led the troops quickly back to the palace as cries went out throughout the city to rise up and attack the Spaniards. Alvarado and his men were successful in repelling the initial attack by the Aztecs.

Cortes arrived back at Tenochtitlan to see the siege himself. He entered the city and made his way to the palace. He asked Moctezuma to address his people and to ask for peace. One version of the history states that when addressing his people, Moctezuma was struck by stones thrown from the crowd. He was taken back inside the palace and died later. Another version states that after failing in his call to peace, Cortes ordered him killed since he was no longer useful. Regardless of how Moctezuma died, the Spanish were now in quite a predicament. They were in the middle of

Tenochtitlan surrounded by tens of thousands angry citizens and warriors. They were being starved out and there was no clear way to escape. Cortes met with his captains and decided to flee the city on the night of July 10, 1520. It is rumored that the night of the July 9, Cortes gathered all the gold in the center of the palace and told the troops to carry with them what they wanted, knowing that gold was heavy and could slow them down during the escape.

On the rainy night of July 10, 1520, the Spanish and their allies quietly began exiting the city via the Tacuba causeway. It is said that the mass of men made it to the edge of the city when a woman filling up her water jars spotted them. She quickly let out a cry that the Spaniards were escaping. Almost instantly warriors came after them. The Aztecs attacked them from behind, on the sides using canoes and in front from the land. The greedy soldiers who weighed themselves down with gold moved slowly and were quickly killed or drowned in the water. The Spanish fought hard as the Aztecs surrounded them. After losing two-thirds of the Spanish soldiers and thousands of the Tlaxcalan allies, Cortes and the remaining soldiers and Indian allies went toward Tlaxcala to find refuge and heal their wounds. As they continued their journey they came upon the Plain of Otumba, a vast, flat space. As they approached they saw thousands upon thousands of Aztec warriors facing them. Cortes and the men were surprised, but Cortes, being a smart soldier, was able to select which one of the generals was in charge. Knowing this, he mounted his horse, joined by several other men, and attacked the Aztecs, focusing on the general, who Cortes was able to capture. This threw the rest of the Aztecs into a confused frenzy and they quickly left the battlefield.

Cortes and his men returned to Tlaxcala where they were well-received and cared for.

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Independent reading

Essay writing

Internet access/researching

#### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Post the essay questions on the chalkboard, on an overhead or on butcher paper.

If possible, reserve the school's computer lab so that students can view the websites listed in the Materials/Resource section for more information.

#### ACTIVITIES

**TO THE TEACHER:** Make sure that students have read *The Broken Spears*, chapters 7 through 10, pages 56-90; and in *The Conquest of New Spain*, pages 217-307. Instruct the students to write comprehensive essays over the questions posted.

**TO THE STUDENT:** Read the following sections of the books: *The Broken Spears*, chapters 7 through 10, pages 56-90; and in *The Conquest of New Spain*, pages 217-307. Take notes to remember key aspects from the events that occurred. In an essay, answer the following questions. Remember to use correct punctuation, spelling and grammar. You may want to visit some of the listed websites for more information.

Questions to be answered:

- Explain why Cortes and his men were received so well in Tenochtitlan. Why didn't Moctezuma kill them quickly?
- Why did the Aztecs provide food, water and free run of the city to the Spaniards?
- What actions did Diego Velasquez take to stop Cortes? Was he successful?
- Did the addition of Narvaez' troops strengthen Cortes' position in Tenochtitlan?
- Explain specifically why the Aztecs revolted when Pedro de Alvarado was in charge. What action instigated the Aztec anger?
- Between the different readings, what do you think happened to Moctezuma? Justify your explanation.
- The phrase "La Noche Triste" is loosely translated as "the sad night." For who was this a sad night?
- What did the Aztecs do to try to change the mind of the Tlaxcalan Indians so that they wouldn't allow them to return there to safety?

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*The Broken Spears*

*The Conquest of New Spain*

Butcher paper

<http://AmbergrisCaye.com/pages/mayan/aztec.html>

<http://www.thedagger.com/conquest.html#table>

<http://www.bbslaguna.com.mx/Conquest/>

<http://www.indians.org/welker/aztec.htm>

ASSESSMENT

Evaluate students on the questions listed in the Activities section. Each student is to write an essay answering these questions. At the high school level, students should be able to elaborate and fully explain their answers to these questions.

Use the following rubric to help in assessing the essay.

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	The student has addressed and answered each question thoroughly. The answers present logical justifications and indicate that not only did the student read the passages but they were able to elaborate on their answers indicating an understanding of the events that took place. There are fewer than five grammar, spelling and punctuation errors. This essay is obviously above grade level.
3 .....	The student has addressed and answered the questions thoroughly. However, they have not provided justifications for their answers. There are between six to 10 grammar, spelling and punctuation errors. The essay is good, but not superior work.
2 .....	The student has not addressed all of the questions asked. The student may have only answered six of the questions, but did not justify their answers. The essay contains between 11 to 15 grammar, spelling and punctuation errors. The essay is below grade level.
1 .....	The student has addressed less than six questions. The answers provided are vague, unclear and are not justified. The essay contains over 16 grammar, spelling and punctuation errors. The essay is well below grade level. It is suggested that the student be required to do the essay over.

## LESSON 6: Regrouping and the Destruction of Tenochtitlan

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. (RW4)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process, and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes.

Students recognize, understand, and use formal grammar in speaking and writing.

Students will apply formal usage in speaking and writing.

Students will use correct sentence structure in writing.

Students will demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Students will make predictions, analyze, draw conclusions, and discriminate between fact and opinion in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Students will read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary.

Students know the general chronological order of events and people in history.

Students use appropriate traditional and electronic technologies in a variety of formats to extend and enhance learning of historical facts and concepts.

Students use appropriate technologies to enable historical inquiry.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will read about the planning that took place to implement the final assault on Tenochtitlan.

Students will learn about the outpouring of support that came from the Tlaxcalan Indians.

Students will read about the military strategy used by Cortes to attack Tenochtitlan.

Students will learn about the loss of life from both the Aztecs and the Spanish.

Students will learn about how the small pox left a deadly mark on the Aztec people.

### SPECIFICS

After “La Noche Triste,” Cortes and the remaining soldiers under him managed to make it back to Tlaxcala. Over two-thirds of the Spanish soldiers lost their lives on the causeway and its bridges.

It was not too long after “La Noche Triste” that Cortes began to formulate his attack on the Tenochtitlan. Cortes strategically laid out his battle plans. The plan was very involved, calling for the construction of 13 sloops (a type of gun boat). With these Cortes would be able to control all the movement on the lake surrounding the city. The canoes of the Aztecs would be no match for the sloops. Another part of the plan was to position the Spanish and Tlaxcalan allies into position prior to attacking the city. This meant defeating some of the existing cities on the shoreline of Lake Texcoco. With all the Spaniards healed from their wounds and construction of the sloops complete, the men moved toward Tenochtitlan.

However, while Cortes and his men were healing from the battle wounds they endured, the Aztecs were busy themselves. They were cleaning out the city, especially the palace, of the dead and anything that reminded them of the Spanish. They did not believe that the Spanish would ever return after suffering such an overwhelming defeat on “La Noche Triste.” The Spaniards did leave one thing behind in the city of Tenochtitlan — small pox. The sickness came from a slave who had come with Panfilo de Narvaez. The Aztecs had never before been exposed to this sickness and their bodies had no way of fighting it. Eventually, the masses within the city began sick and started dying by the hundreds. The warriors were not immune from this sickness and they too felt the wrath of the small pox.

As Cortes began to implement his plan to attack Tenochtitlan, he was bombarded by attacks from the weakened warriors of Tenochtitlan. Several attempts were made to burn the sloops that had been constructed.

Cortes began his siege on the city. He quickly controlled the lake with his sloops, thus eliminating anything going into the city. Cortes then cut off the supply of fresh water going into the city by destroying the aqueduct that supplied it. He began to attack the city from the causeways but met heavy resistance and had to pull back. He did this many times, being pushed back by the sheer number of Aztec soldiers. The siege continued for seven months, with the Spanish slowly, but eventually, entering the city. Every foot of the city was contested and the rooftops of each house and building held a group of warriors determined to fight on. The only hope Cortes had was to destroy each building as he came upon it. Cortes then ordered the rubble from the buildings be thrown into the numerous canals within the city. This would allow horses and canons to be easily moved into position to fight the next area to be leveled. This went on and on, pushing the Aztec people back farther and farther into the city. The Aztecs were suffering greatly. Their warriors were fighting bravely, they were weakened by the small pox that was ravaging the city. The women, children and elderly of the city who survived the attacks, were moved farther back into the city. They were sick, dying and starving, and there was simply no food to feed the hungry. The cries of the surviving populous was horrid, but the brave warriors continued to fight.

The end neared when the leader of the Aztecs, Cuahtemoc, tried to escape from Tenochtitlan. He was trying to get to the shore so that he could instigate a guerilla-type warfare against the Spanish. But the hopes of the Aztecs were dashed when Cuahtemoc was captured. Peace was eventually declared.

## What will be done to help students learn this?

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Independent reading  
Compare and contrast  
Essay writing  
Text analysis

### PRETEACHING

The teacher may want to review the concept of compare and contrast. This is an important concept to grasp for the activity in this lesson.

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Post the specific grading requirements and rubric on the chalkboard or the overhead so that the students can construct their essay.

### ACTIVITIES

**TO THE TEACHER:** Instruct the students to read the following passages: *The Broken Spears*, pages 91–146; and *The Conquest of New Spain*, pages 308–353. When done they will be assigned to do a comparison/contrast essay between the two different accounts of the siege and capture of the city.

**TO THE STUDENT:** You are assigned to work individually and read the following excerpts: *The Broken Spears*, pages 91–146; and *The Conquest of New Spain* pages 308–353. When you are done you will have to write a comparison/contrast essay between the two different versions. The requirements in the essay are as follows:

- Your essay should be 8-10 pages long, typed.
- Your grade will be lowered for spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes.
- You must provide specific examples of how each book compared or contrasted at least three different events.
- Your essay must represent views from both the Aztec and the Spanish perspective.
- You must address how small pox played a role in the defeat of the Aztecs.
- You must explain what kind of special equipment was constructed by the Spaniards and how it benefitted them?
- You must explain the type of actions the Aztecs took to deter the advancements of the Spanish?

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*The Broken Spears*  
*The Conquest of New Spain*

**ASSESSMENT**

To assess the essay use the following criteria and grading scale. Content will most likely vary greatly for each student in their essays. All essays must contain the following elements.

<b>Element</b>	<b>Points Possible</b>	<b>Teacher Assessment</b>
Length of essay (10 pts. per page) .....	80	_____
Grammar, spelling, punctuation .....	20	_____
5 errors or less — minus 5 points		
6-10 errors — minus 10 points		
11-15 points — minus 15 points		
16+ errors — minus 20 points		
Three comparison/contrast events (25 each) .....	75	_____
Essay represents Aztec and Spanish perspective .....	25	_____
Addresses equipment constructed by Spaniards .....	25	_____
Aztec strategies to deter Spanish advances .....	25	_____
TOTAL .....	250	_____

Grading scale	Grade
250–225 .....	A
224–200 .....	B
199–175 .....	C
174–150 .....	D
149–below .....	F

## UNIT ASSESSMENT

### How will students demonstrate proficiency?

#### PERFORMANCE TASK

This assessment is intended to assess major points from each lesson. The student will be asked to complete a 15-page term paper that addresses key aspects from each lesson.

In the paper the students need to address the following issues.

- The Aztecs developed a highly advanced civilization. One of the key indicators of this was the construction of their city, Tenochtitlan. Discuss how the development of this city demonstrated a highly advanced society. You may want to address issues such as the canal systems, aqueduct and chinampas.
- Discuss the importance of Juan de Grijalva and Hernandez de Cordova, and their contribution, either directly or indirectly, to the conquest.
- How important were allies, such as the Tlaxcalans, to the overall victory of the Spanish? What prompted the Tlaxcalans and other Indian tribes to rise up against the Aztecs?
- Discuss the occupation of Tenochtitlan by the Spaniards. Why did the Aztecs permit the Spanish to accumulate the gold of the city? Why didn't Moctezuma order them killed? Explain the motive of Diego Velasquez and in sending Panifilo de Narvaez to capture Cortes.
- The final destruction of the city was a brutal and long event. What could have been done differently, if anything? What actions did the Aztecs take to lengthen the destruction of the city?

#### SCORING RUBRIC

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	The student has addressed all the issues above with clear, logical responses. They have supported their statements with facts from the readings and provide specific names, dates and places. There are less than 10 grammar, punctuation and spelling errors.
3 .....	The student has addressed all the issues above with clear, logical responses. They may or may not have supported their statements with facts from the readings and provide specific names, dates and places. There are less than 15 grammar, punctuation and spelling errors.
2 .....	The student has addressed most of the issues above with the exception of two or three. They may or may not have supported their statements with facts from the readings. There are less than 20 grammar, punctuation and spelling errors.
1 .....	The student has addressed three or fewer of the issues above. Their statements are more of an opinion, and provide no factual information to provide support or justification. There are more than 20 grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. This is below grade-level work. The teacher may consider having the student redo the assignment.

## Lesson Extensions

For more advanced students or students eager to learn more about the conquest, please review the following topics and assign them as extra credit written or discussion work.

- Discuss how the new race (Mestizo) was created by the interaction between the Spanish and Indian tribes of Mexico. Discuss the importance of this new race.
- After such a significant event in history, explain how the following people are viewed:
  - Doña Marina — some view her as a heroine, others as a traitor. Was her position one of destiny? Why do some consider her matronly? How would she be viewed today?
  - Moctezuma — some view him as a great leader, others as a weak ruler who gave in to the undermanned Spanish, thus sacrificing his people. What could he have done differently to change the outcome of the conquest? Do you believe he really thought Cortes was Quetzalcoatl?
  - Cortes — some view him as a great military leader to accomplish so much with so little. Others view him as a murderer and coldhearted villain. Could he have defeated the Aztecs any differently? Was his primary goal power and gold? How do you think he should be viewed?

## Bibliography

### Books

Portilla, Miguel. *The Broken Spears*. Beacon Press. Boston, 1990.

The book provides several firsthand accounts of the events during the conquest. This compilation of native sources provides an excellent perspective which is seldom seen.

Diaz, Bernal. *The Conquest of New Spain*. Penguin Books. London, 1963.

Diaz was a member of the conquest and provides a very good and in-depth perspective of the conquest from the Spanish point of view. It is said to be the most accurate of conquest histories.

Morris, J.B. *Five Letters of Cortes to the Emperor*. New York, 1991.

This book provides the translations of the letters that Hernan Cortes sent to the King of Spain. The letters provide tremendous insight of the events of the conquest through Cortes' eyes.

Prescott, William. *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*. Random House, 1988.

The original work by Prescott was published in 1843. It still serves as one of the quintessential sources about the conquest. Prescott goes to great effort to write the history with a certain flair seldom found in historical texts

### Web sites

The Aztecs/Mexicas

<http://www.indians.org/welker/aztec.htm>

This is an extremely good resource that provides in-depth knowledge about many aspects of the Aztecs. In addition, it provides many additional links to information on specific Aztec topics

<http://AmbergrisCaye.com/pages/mayan/aztec.html>

An extremely comprehensive website that offers a thorough account of the Conquest. This website provides a great, lengthy history with a few detailed, all-important maps.

<http://www.thedagger.com/conquest.html#table>

An excellent web site, provides a concise history that highlights the major events of the conquest. Very thorough. Provides an excellent perspective.

<http://www.bsllaguna.com.mx/Conquest/>

This website posts the full text of *The Conquest of Mexico* by William Prescott. It is an exceptional account of the Conquest.

### Video

Leutisig, Jack. *500 Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Aztecs*. TIG Productions, Distributed by Warner Home Video, Burbank, CA.

This video provides a very comprehensive version of the conquest and the history of the Aztecs. It is a great video to show to students to provide them with a good overview of the conquest.

## About the Author

Dan Villescas was born in El Paso, Texas, and moved to Denver in the late 70s. He attended Metropolitan State College of Denver and graduated with a degree in History.

Dan is working on his masters degree in Education at Regis University in Denver, and is expecting to graduate in August of 2000. Dan recently began classes in the Leadership Academy, a joint program through the University of Colorado at Denver, Denver University, Jefferson County Public Schools and Denver Public Schools. This program is designed to educate prospective leaders in the role of administrators and principals. Dan expects to complete this program in December of 2000.

Dan has taught in the Denver Public Schools for three years as a 6th grade bilingual Social Studies teacher. He also coached flag football and basketball at Lake Middle School. Dan recently left the classroom to work as a Curriculum Development Specialist for the Alma Curriculum and Teacher Training Program. Before leaving the classroom, Dan received the Crystal Apple Teaching Award. This award is based on peer nomination for outstanding teachers in the classroom and the community.

Most importantly, Dan is a proud husband and father of two children and resides in southwest Denver. Dan aspires to move into the administration or principal areas of education.