**IN GROUPS OF 2-3…**

In groups of 2-3 I want you to use the handouts and your textbook to show all sides of the exploration story. On one side show me what the Spanish were doing and thinking, on the other side show me what the Natives were doing and thinking and in the middle show me the truth. Below you will find things to consider/include

**Things to include:**

Goals/ Missions

Actions/reactions

People

Intentional/Unintentional Consequences

**Ways to include them:**

Quotes from reading

Quotes that they may have said (thought bubbles)

Pictures/ drawings

Fun/disturbing facts!

Summary of readings

Highlight Individuals

**How I Will Grade This…**

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| CATEGORY | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **Use of Class Time** | Used time well during each class period. Focused on getting the project done. Never distracted others. | Used time well during each class period. Usually focused on getting the project done and never distracted others. | Used some of the time well during each class period. There was some focus on getting the project done but occasionally distracted others. | Did not use class time to focus on the project OR often distracted others. |
| **Graphics - Relevance** | All graphics are related to the topic and make it easier to understand. All borrowed graphics have a source citation. | All graphics are related to the topic and most make it easier to understand. All borrowed graphics have a source citation. | All graphics relate to the topic. Most borrowed graphics have a source citation. | Graphics do not relate to the topic OR several borrowed graphics do not have a source citation. |
| **Content - Accuracy** | At least 20 accurate facts are displayed on the poster. | 15 accurate facts are displayed on the poster. | 10 accurate facts are displayed on the poster. | Less than 10 accurate facts are displayed on the poster. |
| **Knowledge Gained** | Student can accurately answer all questions related to facts in the poster and processes used to create the poster. | Student can accurately answer most questions related to facts in the poster and processes used to create the poster. | Student can accurately answer about 75% of questions related to facts in the poster and processes used to create the poster. | Student appears to have insufficient knowledge about the facts or processes used in the poster. |
| **Creativity** | Students were creative in representation, layout, visuals, etc | Students show some creativity in representations, layout, visual, etc | Students show very little creativity in representation, layout, visual, etc | Students have shown no creativity |

Hernán Cortés



Hernán Cortés.  Public Domain Image

Hernán Cortés (1485-1547) was a Spanish conquistador, responsible for the audacious conquest of the Aztec Empire in Central Mexico in 1519. With a force of 600 Spanish soldiers he was able to conquer a vast Empire that had tens of thousands of warriors. He did it through a combination of ruthlessness, guile, violence and luck.

**Cuba**

[Diego Velázquez was tasked with the subjugation of the island of Cuba and selected Cortez for his expedition.] He set out with three ships and 300 men, including young Cortés, who was a clerk assigned to the treasurer of the expedition. Ironically, also along on the expedition was [Bartolomé de Las Casas](http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/coloniallatinamerica/p/lascasas1.htm), who would eventually describe the horrors of the conquest and denounce the conquistadores. The conquest of Cuba was marked by a number of unspeakable abuses, including massacres and the burning alive of native chief Hatuey. Cortés distinguished himself as a soldier and administrator and was made mayor of the new city of Santiago. His influence grew, and he watched in 1517-1518 as two expeditions to conquer the mainland met with failure.

**Conquest of Tenochtitlán**

In 1518 it was Cortés’ turn. With 600 men, he began one of the most audacious feats in history: the conquest of the Aztec Empire, which at that time had tens if not hundreds of thousands of warriors. After landing with his men, he made his way to Tenochtitlán, capital of the Empire. Along the way, he defeated Aztec vassal states, adding their strength to his. He reached Tenochtitlán in 1519 and was able to occupy it without a fight. When Governor Velázquez of Cuba sent an expedition under [Pánfilo de Narváez](http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/coloniallatinamerica/p/narvaez.htm) to rein in Cortés, he had to leave the city to fight. He defeated Narváez and added his men to his own.

**Return to Tenochtitlán**

Cortés returned to Tenochtitlán with his reinforcements, but found it in a state of uproar, as one of his lieutenants, [Pedro de Alvarado](http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/theconquestofthemaya/a/08palvaradobio.htm), had ordered a massacre of Aztec nobility in his absence. Aztec Emperor Moctezuma was killed by his own people while trying to placate the crowd and an angry mob chased the Spanish from the city in what became known as the Noche Triste, or “sad night.” Cortés was able to regroup, re-take the city and by 1521 he was in charge of Tenochtitlán for good.

**Cortés’ Good Luck**

Cortés never could have pulled off the defeat of the Aztec Empire without a great deal of good luck. First of all, he had found Gerónimo de Aguilar, a Spanish priest who had been shipwrecked on the mainland several years before and who could speak the Maya language. Between Aguilar and a woman slave named Malinche who could speak Maya and Nahuatl, Cortés was able to communicate effectively during his conquest.

Cortés also had amazing luck in terms of the Aztec vassal states. They nominally owed allegiance to the Aztec, but in reality hated them and Cortés was able to exploit this hatred. With thousands of native warriors as allies, he was able to meet the Aztecs on strong terms and bring about their downfall.

He also benefited from the fact that Moctezuma was a weak leader, who looked for divine signs before making any decisions. Cortés believed that Moctezuma thought that the Spanish were emissaries from the God Quetzalcoatl, which may have caused him to wait before crushing them.

Cortés’ final stroke of luck was the timely arrival of reinforcements under the inept Pánfilo de Narváez. Governor Velázquez intended to weaken Cortés and bring him back to Cuba, but after Narváez was defeated he wound up providing Cortés with men and supplies that he desperately needed.

**Governor**

From 1521 to 1528 Cortés served as governor of New Spain, as Mexico came to be known. The crown sent administrators, and Cortés himself oversaw the rebuilding of the city and exploration expeditions into other parts of Mexico. Cortés still had many enemies, however, and his repeated insubordination caused him to have very little support from the crown. In 1528 he returned to Spain to plead his case for more power. What he got was a mixed bag: he was elevated to noble status and given the title of Marquis of the Oaxaca Valley, one of the richest territories in the New World. He was also, however, removed from the governorship and would never again wield much power in the New World.

**Legacy**

In his bold but ghastly conquest of the Aztecs, Cortés left a trail of bloodshed that other conquistadores would follow. The “blueprint” that Cortés established – dividing native populations against one another and exploiting traditional enmities – was one followed later by Pizarro in Peru, Alvarado in Central America and other conquests.

Cortés' success in bringing down the mighty Aztec Empire quickly became the stuff of legend back in Spain. Most of his soldiers had been peasants or younger sons of minor nobility back in Spain and had little to look forward to in terms of wealth or prestige. After the conquest, however, any of his men who had survived were given generous lands and plenty of native slaves, in addition to gold. These rags-to-riches stories drew thousands of Spanish to the New World, each of whom wished to follow in Cortés’ bloody footprints.

In the short run, this was (in a sense) good for the Spanish crown, because native populations were quickly subjugated by these ruthless conquistadores. In the long run, however, it proved disastrous because these men were the wrong sort of colonizers: they were not farmers or tradesmen, but soldiers, slavers and mercenaries who abhorred honest work.

One of Cortés’ lasting legacies was the *encomienda* system that he instituted in Mexico. The encomienda system, a left over relic from the days of the reconquest, basically “entrusted” a tract of land and any number of natives to a Spaniard, often a conquistador. The *encomendero*, as he was called, had certain rights and responsibilities. Basically, he agreed to provide religious education for the natives in exchange for labor. In reality, the encomienda system amounted to little more than legalized, enforced slavery and made the encomenderos very wealthy and powerful. The Spanish crown would eventually regret allowing the encomienda system to take root in the New World, as it later proved very difficult to get rid of once reports of abuses began piling up.

In modern Mexico, Cortés is often a reviled figure. Modern Mexicans identify as closely with their native past as with their European one, and they see Cortés as a monster and butcher. Equally reviled (if not more so) is the figure of Malinche, or Doña Marina, Cortés’ Nahua slave/consort. If not for Malinche’s language skills and willing assistance, the conquest of the Aztec Empire would almost certainly have taken a different path.

<http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/theconquistadors/a/cortesbio_2.htm>

**The Colonial Period:**

Latin America has seen wars, dictators, famines, economic booms, [foreign interventions](http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/modernlatinamerica/p/intervention.htm) and a whole assortment of varied calamities over the years. Each and every period of its history is crucial in some way to understanding the present-day character of the land. Even so, the Colonial Period (1492-1810) stands out as being the era that did the most to shape what Latin America is today. Here are six things you need to know about the Colonial Era:

**The native population was wiped out:**

Some estimate that the population of Mexico’s Central Valleys was around 19 million before the arrival of the Spanish: it had dropped to 2 million by 1550. That’s just around Mexico City: native populations on Cuba and Hispaniola were all but wiped out, and every native population in the New World suffered some loss. Although the bloody conquest took its toll, the main culprits were diseases like [smallpox](http://dermatology.about.com/cs/smallpox/a/smallpoxhx.htm). The natives had no natural defenses against these new diseases, which killed them far more efficiently than the conquistadors ever could.

**Native culture was forbidden:**

Under Spanish rule, native religion and culture were severely repressed. Whole libraries of native [codices](http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/Maya/p/Maya-Books.htm) (they’re different than our books in some ways, but essentially similar in look and purpose) were burned by zealous priests who thought that they were the work of the Devil. Only a handful of these treasures remain. Their ancient culture is something that many native Latin American groups are currently trying to regain as the region struggles to find its identity.

**The Spanish system promoted exploitation:**

Conquistadores and officials were granted [“encomiendas,”](http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/theconquestofperu/p/Spain-S-American-Colonies-And-The-Encomienda-System.htm) which basically gave them certain tracts of land and everyone on it. In theory, the encomenderos were supposed to look after and protect the people that were in their care, but in reality it was often nothing more than legalized slavery. Although the system did allow for natives to report abuses, the courts functioned exclusively in Spanish, which essentially excluded most of the native population, at least until very late in the Colonial Era.

**Existing power structures were replaced:**

Before the arrival of the Spanish, Latin American cultures had existing power structures, mostly based on castes and nobility. These were shattered, as the newcomers killed off the most powerful leaders and stripped the lesser nobility and priests of rank and wealth. The lone exception was Peru, where some Inca nobility managed to hold onto wealth and influence for a time, but as the years went on, even their privileges were eroded into nothing. The loss of the upper classes contributed directly to the marginalization of native populations as a whole.

**Native history was rewritten:**

Because the Spanish did not recognize native codices and other forms of record keeping as legitimate, the history of the region was considered open for research and interpretation. What we know about pre-Columbian civilization comes to us in a jumbled mess of contradictions and riddles. Some writers seized the opportunity to paint earlier native leaders and cultures as bloody and tyrannical. This in turn allowed them to describe the Spanish conquest as a liberation of sorts. With their history compromised, it is difficult for today’s Latin Americans to get a grasp on their past.

**Colonists were there to exploit, not develop:**

The Spanish (and Portuguese) colonists who arrived in the wake of the conquistadores wanted to follow in their footsteps. They did not come to build, farm or ranch, and in fact farming was considered a very lowly profession among the colonists. These men therefore harshly exploited native labor, often without thinking about the long-term. This attitude severely stunted the economic and cultural growth of the region. Traces of this attitude are still found in Latin America, such as the Brazilian celebration of malandragem, a way of life of petty crime and swindling.

**Analysis:**

Just as psychiatrists study the childhood of their patients in order to understand the adult, a look at the “infancy” of modern Latin America is necessary to truly comprehend the region today. The destruction of whole cultures – in every sense – left the majority of the population lost and struggling to find their identities, a struggle which continues to this day. The power structures put in place by the Spanish and Portuguese still exist: witness the fact that Peru, a nation with a large indigenous population, just recently elected the first native president in their long history.

This marginalization of native people and culture is ending, and as it does many in the region are trying to find their roots. This fascinating movement bears watching in the years to come.

<http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/coloniallatinamerica/p/colonialera.htm>

**First Contact**

Most American school children learn to recite this little phrase: 'In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.' Columbus, in fact, was just one of many explorers sponsored by European monarchs in the 1400s who were all trying to find a better, cheaper, faster route to Asia than their neighbors, in order to get an edge on the lucrative trade goods from the East Indies. Knowing perfectly well that the world was round, Christopher Columbus sailed west, set foot in the Bahamas and other islands, and returned back home with stories of the 'Indians' he had met, believing China was just over the horizon.

Even though Columbus was completely ignorant of the new continent he had encountered, his voyage changed the course of human history - fast. Within two years, the Pope had divided the so-called 'uncivilized world' between Portugal and Spain in a deal known as the Treaty of Tordesillas. The islands Columbus explored became known for all posterity as the West Indies, and the native inhabitants of the entire hemisphere became collectively known as Indians. Columbus was followed by wave upon wave of European explorers and conquerors motivated by **God, gold, and glory**.

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| Europeans Followed Columbus |
| European explorers followed Columbus motivated by God, gold and glory  |

Some of the long term effects of this contact are the subject of another lesson, called the Columbian Exchange, in which people, diseases, foods, and animals moved across the globe. But some of the earliest contacts between Europeans and Native Americans very quickly and permanently shaped the development of North America. Whether they were looking for riches, hoping to spread Christianity, or wanting fame back home, their most important legacy was in the things they left behind.

**Death**

Everywhere the explorers went, death followed. 'There were 60,000 people living on this island, including the Indians,' noted a Spanish priest named Bartolomé de Las Casas, 'so that from 1494 to 1508, over three million people had perished from war, slavery, and the mines.'

While the priest's estimates of the population before Columbus arrived are probably off by quite a bit, it did only take 30 years to nearly eradicate the native population of the Bahamas. And though there was war and slavery and overwork, the biggest killer by far was disease. The Western Hemisphere had been completely free of infectious diseases that were common in Europe. So the indigenous people had absolutely no exposure or resistance to illnesses like smallpox, which spread from tribe to tribe along the trade routes, even in places where Europeans never even set foot. It's impossible, of course, to get a precise pre-Columbian population count, but by using observable models and reliable censuses, modern historians commonly accept that around 90% of all Native Americans died as a result of contact with Europeans.

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| Natives Wiped Out in Thirty Years |
| It took about 30 years for the native population of the Bahamas to be nearly eradicated  |

In general, the effects were the worst in South and [**Central America**](http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/central-america-history-lesson-quiz.html) where the Spanish explored in the 1500s. But that's not to say North America avoided the epidemic; it just took a little longer. In 1620, when the Pilgrims arrived on the Mayflower in Plymouth, they discovered a Patuxet village conveniently empty, because every one of its residents had died. Archaeologists have since discovered evidence of other such civilizations that disappeared from memory.

**Metal Tools**

One of the main motivations for exploration was the search for precious metals. The great irony here is that the metals brought from Europe to America proved to be far more valuable. Of course, steel helped the Europeans conquer the Americas, but tribes across the hemisphere were, in fact, helped by the introduction of metal tools and weapons.

Though some Native cultures were quite advanced in, say, astronomy or agriculture or engineering, they still used [**Stone Age**](http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/the-stone-age-period-lesson-quiz.html) tools made from bone, wood, stone, or clay with very limited knowledge of metalworking and no steel. It didn't take long for them to realize that metal implements were far more efficient for many uses, and the tribes that got them first had an edge over those who didn't. However, without the right raw materials, knowledge, or conditions, they were unable to reproduce metal goods like knives and hatchets and fishhooks, leaving them completely dependent on trade and at a distinct disadvantage to the whites.

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| Metal-Tools-Helped-Natives |
| Metal tools introduced by the Europeans gave tribes an edge over those without metal tools  |

Though European weaponry was superior and proved to be useful in the long term, firearms didn't really present an overwhelming advantage at first contact. Besides the fact that very few soldiers even carried a gun, they were heavy, slow to load, and not terribly accurate. Except at very close range, a skilled archer was faster and more accurate with a bow and arrow than most soldiers would have been with a firearm. And European explorers couldn't repair or replace their weapons, and they only had as much ammunition as they could carry. That balance of power would change in the 19th century as gun technology improved.

<http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/effects-of-european-colonization-christopher-columbus-and-native-americans.html#lesson>













