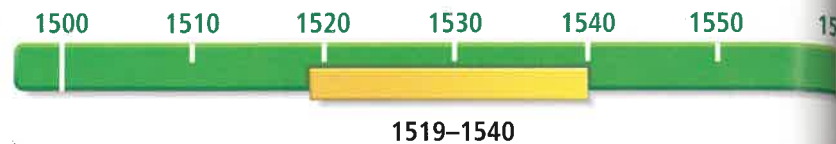


Core Lesson 4

Conquest of the Americas



VOCABULARY

expedition
conquistador
empire

Vocabulary Strategy

expedition

The word **expedition** begins with the prefix **ex-**, meaning "out." An expedition goes out to explore.

READING SKILL

Compare and Contrast

Contrast what Spanish explorers were looking for with what they found.

STANDARDS

SS.A.4.2.1.5.1 Exploration of Americas
SS.A.4.2.1.5.2 Impact of Exploration

Build on What You Know Many books and movies today tell stories about people traveling to other worlds. In 1519, when the Spanish and the Aztecs first met, it was like a meeting of people from two different worlds.

Cortés Conquers the Aztecs

Main Idea Spanish soldiers conquered the Aztecs in present-day Mexico.

The travels of **Columbus** and **Balboa** were exciting news in Europe. Sending ships and soldiers across an ocean was expensive, but Spain's rulers believed the explorers would bring back gold.

One of these explorers was **Hernán Cortés** (er NAN kohr TEHS). In 1519, Cortés led an expedition to Mexico. An **expedition** is a journey to achieve a goal. Cortés's ships carried horses, weapons, and an army of more than 500 conquistadors (kohn KEY stah doors). **Conquistador** is Spanish for conqueror. The conquistadors were eager to find wealth and fame for themselves and their families.

Cortés had heard stories about the Aztec Indians in present-day Mexico. The Aztecs had built an empire by conquering other Indian nations. An **empire** is many nations or territories ruled by a single group or leader.

Aztec Sun Stone

The Aztec civilization had its own calendar. This carved stone is 13 feet across.



Cortés and Moctezuma A Spanish artist in the 1500s made this drawing of Cortés and Moctezuma at the gates of Tenochtitlán.

After landing in Mexico, Cortés met people who were enemies of the Aztec empire. Cortés convinced them to come with him to defeat the Aztecs. An Indian woman named **Malinche** (Mah LEEN chay) joined Cortés. She helped him to communicate with the Aztecs and gave advice about how to conquer them.

When the conquistadors arrived at the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán (tay nohch tee TLAHN), they were amazed by its size and beauty. One conquistador wrote,

“Indeed, some of our soldiers asked whether it was not all a dream.”

The city was twice as big as any European city and was built in the middle of a lake. Causeways, or land bridges, stretched across the lake to the city.

The Aztec ruler **Moctezuma** welcomed Cortés. Cortés, however, wanted Aztec gold and put Moctezuma in prison.

The Aztecs attacked the Spanish and drove them from Tenochtitlán. Cortés went to neighboring Indian nations that had been conquered by the Aztecs and persuaded them to join his army.

Contact with the Spanish had infected the Aztec army with **disease**. When Cortés returned to Tenochtitlán, he used guns, horses, and steel armor to defeat the weakened Aztec army. Cortés soon controlled the entire Aztec empire. By 1535, Spain had claimed all of Mexico and renamed it New Spain.

After Cortés, other conquistadors explored Central and South America to find more gold and treasures. In the 1530s, a conquistador named **Francisco Pizarro** defeated the powerful Inca empire in South America.

REVIEW Why did people inside the Aztec empire help Cortés defeat the Aztecs?