

In Depth: Smallpox 2

Name: _____

Time _____

Date: _____

Instructions: Read the information below and answer the questions by circling the letter(s)—each question can have more than one answer.

Hernán Cortés

Hernán Cortés was born in Spain in 1485. Giving up studying law for a life of adventure, he went to the New World on a military expedition to conquer Cuba. Pleased with the spoils of conquest, he became interested in tales of a wealthy civilization in the interior of Mexico. In 1519, Cortés led about 500 soldiers to the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico.

As the small army marched, Cortés met a shipwrecked Catholic priest, Geronimo de Aguilar, who learned the Chontal Mayan language while prisoner of the Maya. Afterward, Cortés fought a series of successful battles against the natives at Tabasco where he met his soon-to-be mistress, La Malinche, who could speak Mayan and Nahuatl (naw-watl), the Aztec language. Communicating through Aguilar to La Malinche, Cortés learned more about the Aztecs and their weaknesses.

The Aztecs had enslaved, tortured, and sacrificed many people of the conquered tribes around its capital, Tenochtitlan (ten-ahch-teet-lan). As a result, the natives hated the Aztecs, especially the Tlaxcalans (tlash-ca-lans). As Cortés showed his military strength, these native peoples allied themselves with the Spanish in hopes of destroying the Aztec empire. Cortés needed their help. Despite possessing cannons, horses, metal armor, and swords, 500 Spaniards could not defeat an Aztec army of thousands.

The leader of the Aztecs, Montezuma, watched the Spanish approach with concern. It was the year that Aztec myth predicted the return of Quetzalcoatl (kwet-zal-co-watl), a god that would appear as a bearded, white man from across the sea; Cortés fit that description and Cortés knew it. Montezuma sent gifts to Cortés but also warned him not to approach Tenochtitlan. Cortés ignored the warnings.

Although Montezuma welcomed the Spanish as guests, neither side trusted the

other. The Aztecs vastly outnumbered the Spanish giving the Spanish good reason to fear being captured and sacrificed to an Aztec god. Days later, Cortés captured Montezuma and held him prisoner while the Spanish looted the city of gold and silver. Believing the situation under control, Cortés left the city to deal with other matters on the Mexican coast.

1. What advantage(s) did Cortés have over the Aztecs? (choose two)
 - B. Numerous Native allies
 - H. Smallpox weakened the Aztecs
 - R. A large Spanish army
 - Y. Horses, cannons, armor, and swords were superior weapons

The Aztec people lost confidence in Montezuma and appointed another leader in his place. When the Spanish, for reasons unknown, attacked and killed many Aztecs performing a ritual in a nearby temple, the Aztecs began revolting. Cortés hastily returned to the city but the damage was done. Stories differ, the Spanish said that the Aztecs stoned Montezuma for letting the Spanish into the city, and the Aztecs stated the Spanish strangled Montezuma because he was no longer of value to them. Whatever the events, Montezuma was dead and the great Aztec armies began an attack on the Spanish and their native allies. Cortés lost two-thirds of his men in the retreat out of the city.

A year later, in May 1521, Cortés returned to Tenochtitlan with an army of 100,000 made up of mostly Native warriors. Unbeknownst to Cortés, one of the Spanish soldiers killed in the retreat months earlier had smallpox. When the Aztecs removed the body, they contracted the disease. Having no immunity to European diseases, the smallpox spread quickly and killed

millions of Aztecs. Weakened beyond repair, the Aztecs began surrendering. Approximately eleven million natives lived in central Mexico in 1519, by 1600 scarcely 2.5 million were left.

Description: The author describes a topic by listing characteristics, features, and examples.

Sequence: The author lists items or events in numerical or chronological order.

Comparison: The author explains how two or more things are alike and/or how they are different.

Cause and Effect: The author lists one or more causes and the resulting effect or effects.

Problem and Solution: The author states a problem and lists one or more solutions for the problem.

2. Look at the boxed text above. Identify how the information is presented. (choose one answer only)
- B. Description
 - H. Sequence
 - R. Comparison
 - Y. Cause and effect
 - X. Problem and solution

3. Who was responsible for the death of Montezuma? (choose two)
- B. the Spanish claimed the Aztecs stoned Montezuma
 - H. smallpox killed Montezuma while he was captive
 - R. Montezuma was sacrificed by Aztec priests
 - Y. the Aztecs claimed the Spanish strangled Montezuma

Francisco Pizarro

To the south of Mexico another great empire would experience its own upheaval. Disease traveled faster than the Spanish. Within ten years, smallpox invaded the Inca empire killing its ruler Huayna Capac (hyu-wayna ka-pek). While tens of thousands of Inca began succumbing to the disease, the empire split into two factions, each supporting one of the surviving sons of the dead king. The civil war took a further toll on the stability of the Inca civilization.

After two unsuccessful attempts to reach South America, Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro arrived in Peru in 1532. He had approximately 62 cavalry and 106 soldiers with him. He hoped to find wealth and glory like Hernán Cortés had a decade earlier. To Atahualpa, who had just defeated his brother for the throne of the Inca empire, he saw the small Spanish army as no serious threat.

A meeting between Atahualpa and Pizarro was arranged at the city of Cajamarca on 16 November 1532. Atahualpa was escorted by 6,000 body guards, but they were no match for Spanish horses, cannons, armor, and swords. Pizarro captured Atahualpa and wiped out his entourage. In exchange for his life, Atahualpa agreed to fill a room with gold and two rooms with silver. Despite draining his kingdom of precious metals and fulfilling his side of the bargain, Pizarro had Atahualpa executed nine months later for plotting against the Spanish. Pizarro and the Spanish continued the conquest of Peru, but most of the work had already been done for them. A smallpox epidemic in 1533 and 1535 killed millions of Inca people.

4. What advantage(s) did Pizarro have over the Incas? (choose three)
- B. numerous native allies
 - H. smallpox weakened the Incas
 - R. civil war weakened the Incas
 - Y. horses, cannons, armor, and swords were superior weapons