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| **LESSON 2: COLONIAL RULE**How did Europeans change Latin America? |
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| **EUROPEAN CONQUESTS**An Italian seaman, Christopher Columbus, asked Spain’s rulers to finance his plan to reach Asia by sailing west. In 1492 Columbus first saw land in the Western Hemisphere. It was an island he called San Salvador. He thought it was Asia. Columbus claimed the lands he saw for Spain. He also traded with people he called “Indians” because he thought he was near India.**Dividing the Americas**Columbus’s discovery started a race in Europe for land and riches in the Americas. In 1494 Portugal and Spain signed the Treaty of Tordesillas. It agreed on an imaginary line, called the **Line of Demarcation**, dividing the Americas. All territory west of the line was Spanish. Territory to the east was Portugal’s.In 1500 Portugal claimed the land that is now Brazil because of a sailing accident. Pedro Cabral was sailing off the coast of Africa when a storm forced his ship off course. His ship reached the eastern coast of South America. Cabral was the first of many Portuguese explorers to reach the Americas in the 1500s.Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa (bal•BOH•uh) decided to make his home in the Americas. Balboa heard about “great waters” beyond the mountains in Central America. He wanted to see this for himself. He became the first European to view the Pacific Ocean from the Americas. He also proved that the Americas were not part of Asia.Columbus’s search for a western water route to Asia continued with a Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand Magellan. In 1519 Magellan led a fleet of five ships for Spain. He thought he could sail around the southern tip of South America and cross the Pacific Ocean to reach Asia. In 1521, after a year and a half at sea, Magellan finished his journey and landed in the Philippines. |
| CORTÉS AND THE AZTECIn 1519 a Spanish army led by Hernán Cortés landed on Mexico’s Gulf Coast. He and about 600 soldiers marched to Tenochtitlán. They heard Tenochtitlán was filled with gold.Scouts of the Aztec emperor, Moctezuma, reported Cortés’s march. Moctezuma was dazzled by the Spanish, with their horses and guns, which he had never seen before. He welcomed them into the city.His welcome began the downfall of his empire. The Spanish kidnapped Moctezuma. The Aztec emperor was later killed in a riot.Native Americans who opposed the harsh rule of the Aztec signed treaties with the Spanish and joined them. The Aztec’s simple weapons were no match for the guns, cannons, and horses of the Spanish. Cortés defeated the Aztec within two years. However, it was the European germs that carried diseases, such as small pox, that eventually killed more Aztec than did the Spanish weapons.**PIZARRO AND THE INCA**Another Spanish explorer named Francisco Pizarro wanted the gold and silver of the Inca. In 1532 Pizarro took a small group of Spanish soldiers to South America. The Inca emperor, Atahualpa, had heard about the arrival of Pizarro and had planned on meeting him. Before this could happen, the Spanish attacked the Inca.Pizarro captured Atahualpa, and held him prisoner for months. While Pizarro was waiting for more soldiers from Spain,Atahualpa offered to fill his room with gold in exchange for his freedom. On the same day Atahualpa finished filling the room with gold, Pizarro order him killed.The death of their leaders and European diseases weakened the Inca. Within a few years, Pizarro conquered the empire.**COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA**As a result of the Aztec and Inca conquests, Spain was able to build an empire that included much of South America, the Caribbean, Central America, and parts of the present-day United States. Other European countries seized other parts of the Americas. Portugal became the colonial ruler of what is today Brazil. France, Britain, and the Netherlands took control of some Caribbean islands and parts of North America.To help him govern the Latin American colonies, the Spanish king divided them into divisions called viceroyalties. During the early 1500s, there were two viceroyalties, the Viceroyalty of New Spain and the Viceroyalty of Peru. In the 1700s, the viceroyalties of New Granada and Río de la Plata were carved out of the Viceroyalty of Peru.**A New Way of Life**Colonists greatly changed the way Native Americans lived. Spanish rulers gave encomiendas, or large areas of land, to Spanish colonists. **Encomienda**s included all of the Native Americans living on the land. Europeans spread Christianity among Native Americans. They also used Native Americans as enslaved workers to grow **cash crop**s, or farm products grown for export.When diseases greatly reduced the numbers of Native Americans, European landowners brought enslaved Africans to work on large farms called **plantation**s. A busy trade eventually resulted. Ships carried enslaved people from Africa and manufactured goods from Europe to the Americas, while products, including sugar, cotton, tobacco, gold, and silver, went from the Americas to Europe.**The Middle Passage**During the 1700s, a system of shipping routes linked Europe and Africa with the West Indies and the Americas. A demand for sugar in Europe and the American colonies brought about this world trade. The people of the Caribbean supplied the sugar they grew to the English colonies and to Europe. The demand for sugar caused a demand in the Caribbean for more workers. This led the European to trade goods for captured Africans. They then traded the enslaved Africans in the Caribbean.The captured Africans suffered greatly on their trip, called the Middle Passage. They were chained together. So many prisoners were packed onto the ship that they could hardly move. They were given little food and water. Many died or became sick.**OTHER EUROPEANS EXPLORE**Europeans did not focus their attention only on the land that is now Latin America. Christopher Columbus’s plan had been to find a shortcut to Asia. Instead, he found two large continents! Still, many people believed there must be a shortcut through North America to the Pacific Ocean. They called this waterway the Northwest Passage. Locating and controlling this shortcut would lead to huge profits. The race was on!**English Exploration**John Cabot, an Italian, was one of the first to search for the Northwest Passage. He sailed for England in 1497 and landed on what is now Newfoundland, an island off the coast of Canada. Cabot searched for the passage as he sailed south along the coast.He didn’t find a shortcut. Instead he found an area of the Atlantic Ocean crowded with fish! Sailors scooped them into baskets dropped from the sides of their ships. Colonists who moved to the area built a fishing industry that exported, or sent, dried fish to Europe. Fishing is still important to the economy of this area today.After Cabot’s voyage, England became more concerned with wars at home. Their exploration of North America ended for a long time. When English sailors returned to the continent, they focused on building settlements.**French Exploration**Another Italian, Giovanni da Verrazano, sailed for the French in 1525. He went from what is now North Carolina north to the mouth of the Hudson River.Frenchman Jacques Cartier set out in 1535 as well. He too was in search of a northwest passage. Cartier traveled around Newfoundland and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. During two other trips he traveled down the St. Lawrence River. He did not find a northwest passage.**Dutch Exploration**Englishman Henry Hudson sailed south from what is now Maine along the coast of North America in 1609. The Dutch East India Company paid for his voyage. This group of merchants worked together to pay the costs of the voyage in hopes of making money from it.A second trip in 1610 took Hudson farther north. As winter set in, the ship froze in ice. It was stuck! When spring came, Hudson tried to continue exploring. Tired, hungry, and ready to go home, the crew took over the ship. Hudson, his son, and eight loyal crew members were placed on a boat, left behind, and were never seen again.Do you want to find out more about early explorers? You can use the Internet to investigate more about the explorers described in this lesson. |