

16



Source 16.1 This turquoise mask represents the Aztec god Xiuhtecuhtli, the 'Lord of Fire'

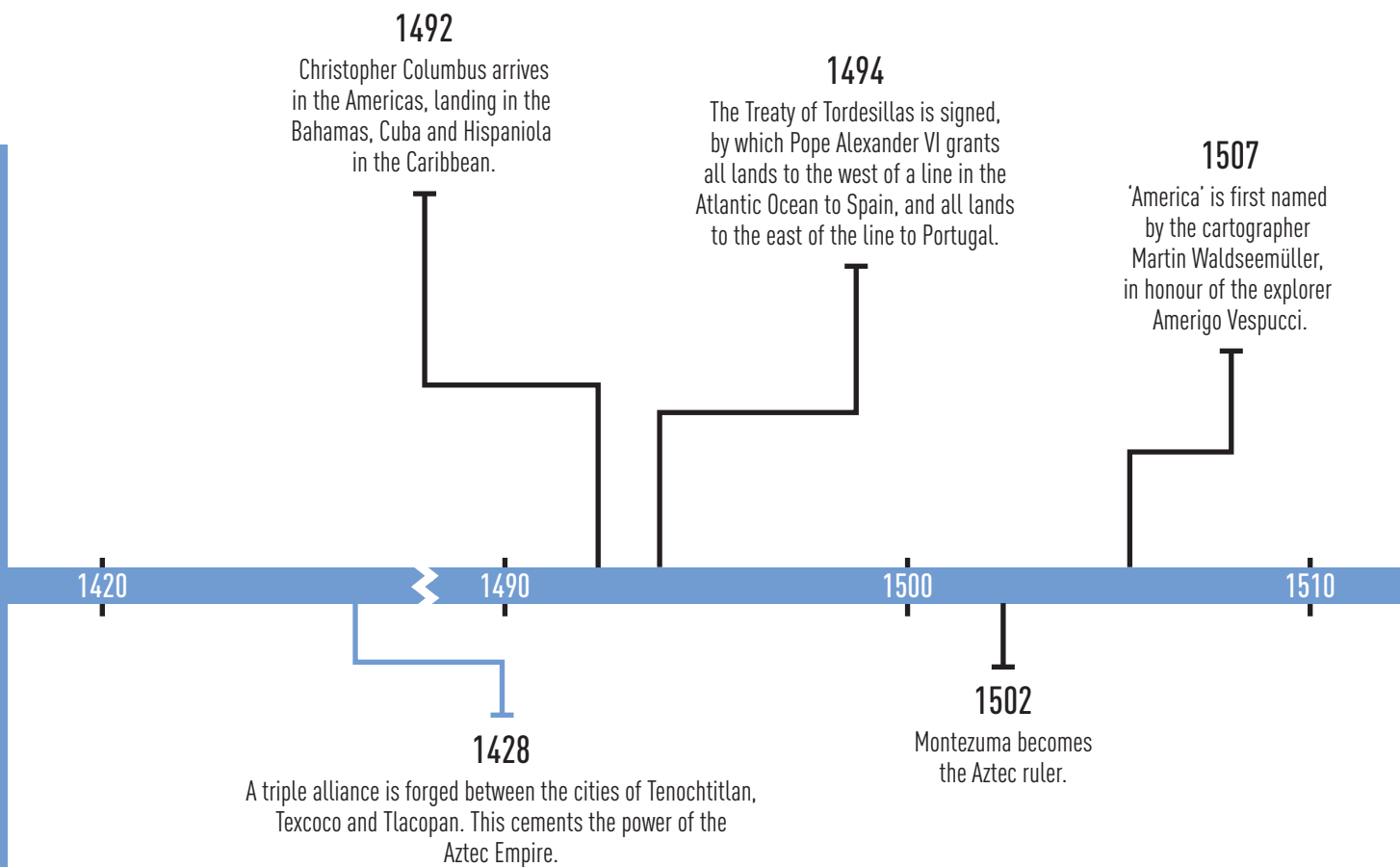
THE SPANISH CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAS

During the Age of Exploration, the European powers sent expeditions to unknown parts of the world. They were motivated by a desire for new territories and the wealth that could be gained from the discovery of new trade routes to Asia. Spanish captains sailed westward, never realising that between them and Asia was the large land mass now called the Americas.

The Spanish discovery and conquest of the Americas brought about the end of two major civilisations – the Aztecs and Incas. They were complex and advanced societies, but were no match for the weapons and diseases that the Spanish brought with them from Europe.

THE SPANISH CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAS – A TIMELINE

T
I
M
E
L
I
N
E



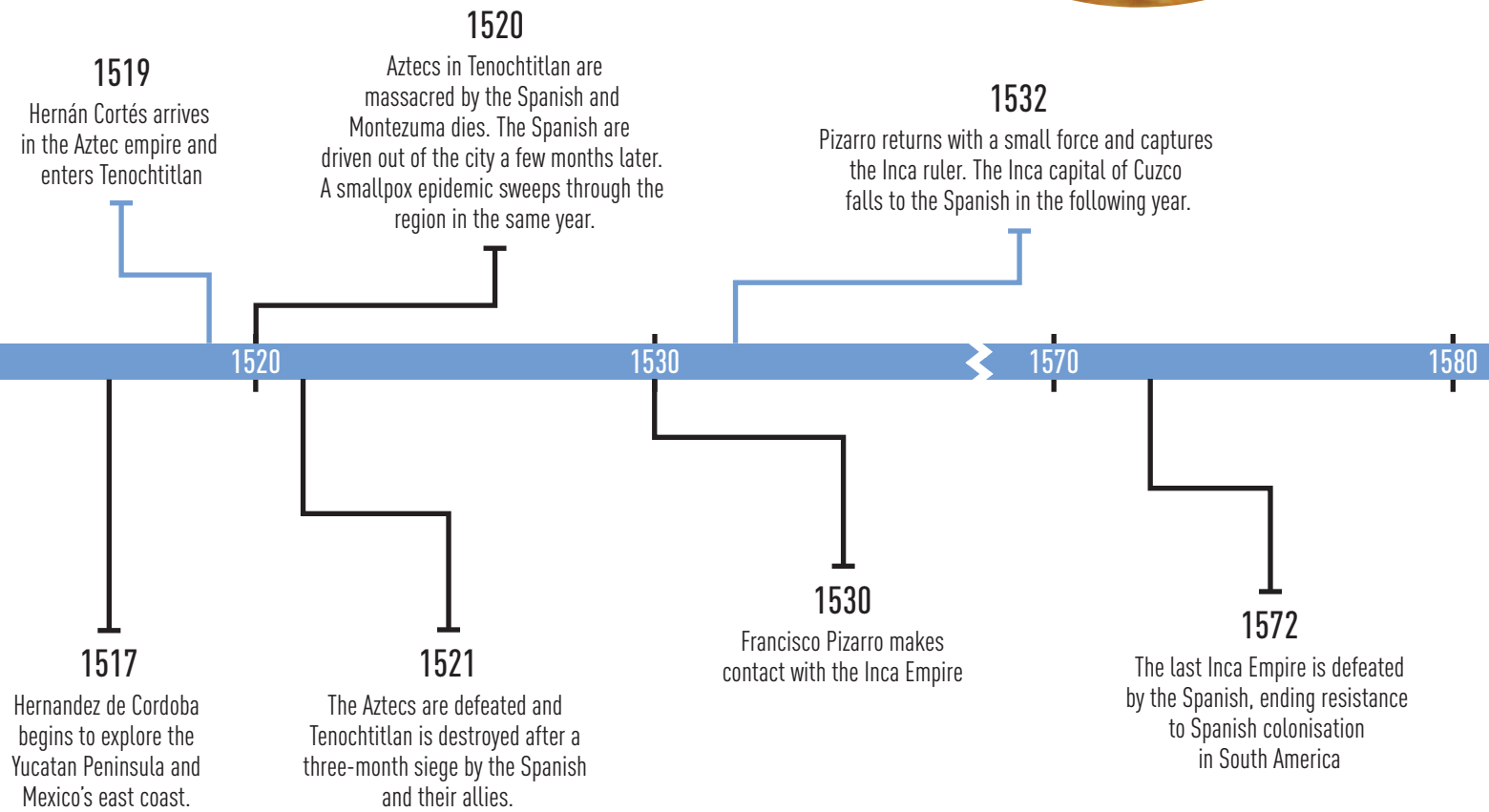
Source 16.2
An artist's impression of the great city of Tenochtitlan



Source 16.3
A 16th-century illustration depicting the arrival of Cortés and his conquistadors in the Aztec Empire.



Source 16.4
A painting showing Pizarro's attack on unarmed Inca warriors in 1532



REVIEW 16.1

- 1 List the Spanish or other Europeans mentioned in the timeline and the key events in the Spanish conquest in the Americas in which they were involved.
- 2 How long was the period between:
 - a the arrival of Cortés in the Aztec Empire and the capture of its capital Tenochtitlan?
 - b Pizarro's arrival in the Inca Empire and the capture of its capital Cuzco?

16.1

SECTION

WHAT WERE KEY FEATURES OF SOCIETIES IN THE AMERICAS BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE SPANISH?

In this section you will find out about the major civilisations of the Aztecs, the Maya and the Inca, and the key aspects of their societies in the **pre-Columbian** period, the time before Christopher Columbus explored the region. You will also investigate the way of life of the Aztecs in greater depth.

THE MAJOR CIVILISATIONS OF THE MAYA, THE AZTECS AND THE INCA

APPLY 16.1

- 1 Use an atlas to find physical maps of North and South America. Examine the maps and describe the main types of environments within the territories of the Aztec, Maya and Inca civilisations as shown in Source 16.6

EXTEND 16.1

- 1 Use an atlas to locate the Bering Strait. A strait is a narrow passage of water that connects two oceans or bodies of water. Which oceans are on either side of the Bering Strait? Which countries are separated by the strait? Estimate the distance across the strait.

Human occupation of the Americas began when people migrated from Asia eastwards, 15 000 to 40 000 years ago. They journeyed on a land bridge between Asia and North America that existed where the Bering Strait is located today, when sea levels were lower. Some peoples moved eastwards and settled across the northern parts of North America.

Others moved into the most southern regions of North America and into South America. There were three main civilisations in this region – the Maya, the Aztecs and the Inca (see Source 16.6). Two of these civilisations remained by the time of the Age of Exploration in the 15th century, when European explorers first reached the Americas. These were the Aztecs, in the region that is now Mexico, and the Incas in the region that is now Peru.



Source 16.5 The Americas



Source 16.6 Details showing the locations of the Aztec, Maya and Inca civilisations

The Maya was the oldest of the three civilisations we will examine. It was at the height of its power between AD 250 and 900, when the Maya ruled a large area around the Yucatán Peninsula (see Source 16.6). The Mayan people did not have a sole leader or capital city. Each of their cities had its own ruler who governed independently. The Maya were skilled in arithmetic and astronomy, as well as having their own form of **hieroglyphic** writing.

Their civilisation declined after AD 900, for reasons that are still not fully understood by historians. A new Mayan empire was built around Chichen Itza, on the Yucatán Peninsula, but this also fell after invasion from neighbouring peoples in the 15th century.

The Aztecs originated in the south of modern-day Mexico. By conquering rival tribes, the Aztecs created an empire that stretched between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. By 1519, there were around 489 city-states in the Aztec empire.

The Incas were originally one of many tribes in the Andes Mountains of South America, in modern-day Peru. They conquered other tribes, and by 1493 the Incan empire had become the most powerful in the pre-Columbian Americas, with the city of Cuzco as its capital. Their territories extended for 4000 km on the western coast of South America. They included parts of modern-day Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. To govern their empire, the Inca developed an efficient administrative system, an extensive network of roads and strategically built stone fortresses. They excelled in working metals such as silver, copper and gold.



Source 16.7 Detail from a reproduction of a fresco at the Mayan site of Bonampak

Key features of the Aztec, Maya and Inca societies

The Maya, Aztec and Inca were agricultural societies. Before the arrival of the Spanish, farming life was very different from that found in Europe. In the Americas, there was no iron or steel, and farmers used digging sticks rather than metal ploughs to turn up the land. There were no horses, cattle, sheep, pigs or goats until they were introduced by the Europeans. In Central America, domestic animals such as turkeys, dogs and guinea pigs were eaten. The Incas kept large herds of llama for use as pack animals. They also kept alpacas, which were prized for their long silky coats that could be woven into cloth.

For many years, historians believed that the wheel was not used in pre-Columbian America. The wheel was not needed for transportation because the terrain was either too mountainous or swampy for animals to pull carts. Pre-Columbian children's toys with wheels however, have been found.

In the Maya, Aztec and Inca societies, the rulers and priests at the top of the social order were privileged, and lived well compared to the ordinary people. The Aztec king ruled with the help of his officials, counsellors, judges and military leaders. These ruling groups lived on their own estates and were the only people allowed to wear cotton cloth, sandals, patterned garments and ornaments made of gold or set with precious stones. All free-born commoners were grouped into clans. Members of each clan owned and farmed their land. They were responsible for maintaining their local temples and schools, which every child attended. At the bottom of the social hierarchy were the landless peasants and slaves.

REVIEW 16.2

- 1 What were the three main civilisations in the Americas?
- 2 What does the term 'pre-Columbian' mean?
- 3 How did farming differ in the Americas and Europe?
- 4 Which groups were at the top of the social hierarchy in pre-Columbian societies in the Americas?



Source 16.8 A pre-Columbian child's toy with wheels

APPLY 16.2

- 1 In a group, conduct research about key aspects of the societies of the Maya, Aztec or Inca societies. Present your information, including relevant sources, to show how the status of people in each society affected the way they lived, and how each society was governed and administered.

THE AZTEC EMPIRE BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE SPANISH



Source 16.9 The Aztec Empire showing the location of its major cities Tenochtitlan, Tlacopan and Texcoco

The rise of the Aztec Empire was very rapid. (The word *Aztec* can refer to the civilisation itself, the people, or just the ruling class. The term that the Aztec people called themselves was the *Mexica*.) The Aztecs expanded their control of territories now in present-day Mexico from around 1428, by conquering other tribes. They also formed an alliance between its major city, Tenochtitlan and the cities of Texcoco and Tlacopan. Of these three cities, Tenochtitlan was by far the largest and most dominant. Tenochtitlan was the centre of Aztec civilisation.



Source 16.10 The Aztec king Montezuma

Social groups in Aztec society

Aztec society was organised according to a strict **hierarchy** (which means that people had a particular place or class in society). There were five major social classes: the emperor, nobles, warriors, commoners and slaves, and there was little chance of movement out of the class into which one was born.

Emperor

At the top of the hierarchy was the emperor. When the Spanish arrived in 1519, the empire was led by Montezuma II (also known as Moctezuma), who had been in power since 1502. The emperor was an absolute ruler, selected as leader by a council of nobles. He was regarded by the people as a god and the 'Great Speaker'. He lived in a highly decorated palace and enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle.

Nobles

The nobility included high-level priests, military leaders, landowners, judges and heads of government. Noble status was passed down from parents to children. Nobles could receive tribute (something given as a mark of respect) from commoners and were the only class other than the emperor allowed to wear decorated capes and jewellery. Wealthy people and heroes of war dressed elaborately, with intricate headdresses (often made of feathers), necklaces, earrings and bangles made of gold, silver, copper and precious stones. Their body art included holes in the ears and split bottom lips. The nobility would also show their

wealth and dominance through extravagant feasts and expensive gifts to each other.

Warriors

Warriors were highly respected in Aztec society. Most males in Tenochtitlan were trained to be warriors. Women could not be warriors. At puberty, most young men left their families and went to live in the local warrior house. There was a formal hierarchy within the warrior group based on how many live captives (who were later sacrificed to the gods) a warrior had taken in battle. Successful warriors could expect to receive gifts and riches, but for most it was a part-time profession. Most warriors had to practice another trade for their livelihood.

Commoners

Commoners included farmers, craftspeople, merchants and low-level priests. They were expected to pay tributes to the nobles who owned the *calpulli* (neighbourhoods) that they lived in. Commoners usually ate basic foods and lived in simple homes. They were not allowed to wear cotton, wear cloaks longer than the knee, or wear sandals in the presence of people with higher rank. Commoners could sometimes become nobles through marriage or bravery in war.

Slaves

Slaves were owned by nobles or wealthy merchants and had few rights. Typically, people became slaves if they were criminals, could not pay their debts or had been captured in war. Slaves could marry with their master's permission and could also buy their freedom. Slave status was not passed down to children; the children of slaves were born free.

The role of men and women in Aztec society

An Aztec family was made up of a man, his chief wife, his other wives, his children, and other relatives such as his parents. Older people were highly respected in Aztec society. Marriages were arranged with help from priests, who would consult the stars to check for suitable matches. Girls married at around 16 years of age and men at around 20 years of age. Both boys and girls went to school, although they were destined for very different lives. Women were expected to care for children, cook and weave cloth. They helped to tend home gardens and any other plots the family was given to work. They had almost no public role. Men were expected to become warriors and seek glory by capturing enemy warriors.



Source 16.11 The long feather headdress worn by an Aztec noble.

The role of men and women in Aztec society

In the 16th century, Spanish explorers commissioned illustrated histories (called codices, which is the plural of codex) to provide information to people back in Spain. Each codex was a collection of animal skin pages, bound together to form a book. These codices (such as the Florentine Codex and the Codex Mendoza) have provided valuable information to historians.

Source 16.12

Midwife's address to newborn boys:

My precious son, my youngest one ... heed, harken: thy home is not here, for thou art an eagle, thou art an ocelotl [a jaguar] ... Thou belongest out there... Thou hast been sent into warfare. War is thy desert, thy task. Thou shalt give drink, nourishment, food to the sun, the lord of the earth. Perhaps thou wilt receive the gift, perhaps thou wilt merit death by the obsidian knife [be killed as a sacrifice to the gods].

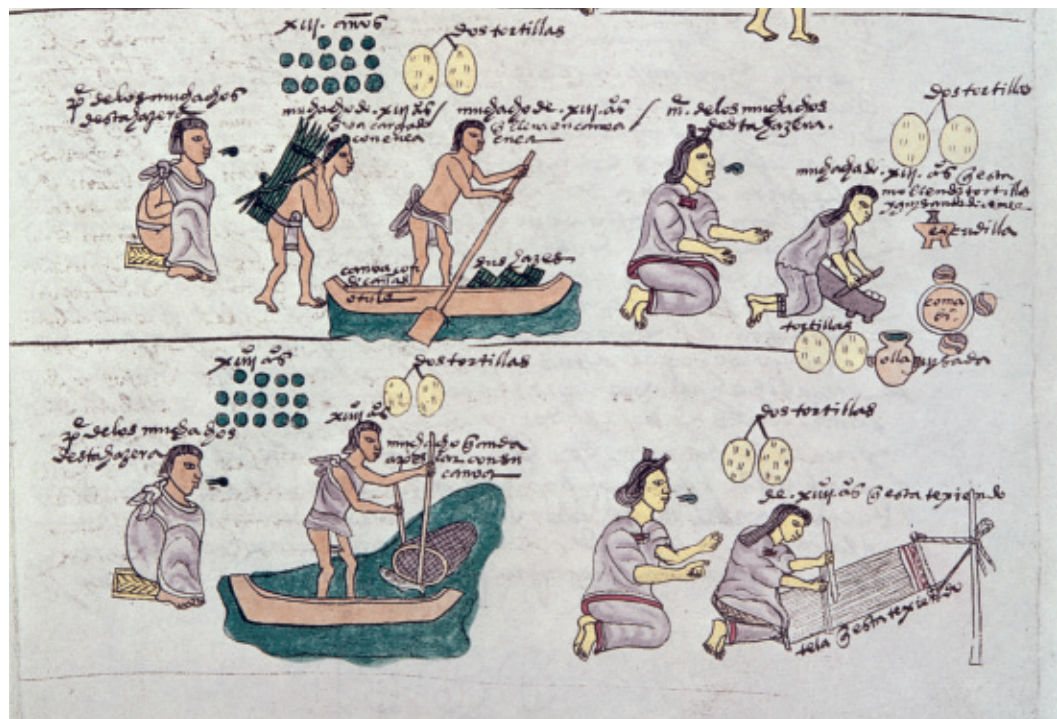
Midwife's address to newborn girls:

Thou wilt be in the heart of the home, thou wilt go nowhere, thou wilt nowhere become a wanderer, thou becomest the banked fire, the hearth stones ... And thou wilt become fatigued, thou wilt become tired; thou art to provide water, to grind maize, to drudge; thou art to sweat by the ashes, by the hearth [the floor of a fireplace].

Part of the addresses given by midwives to newborn boys and girls as described in the *Florentine Codex*

INTERPRET 16.1

- 1 What do the sources tell you about the role and expectations of men and women in Aztec society?



- Source 16.13 Illustrations from the 16th-century Codex Mendoza provide an account of Aztec life. These illustrations show the meal ration (two tortillas) and typical tasks for children. On the left hand side, a 13-year-old boy carries a load of rushes on his back and transports them in his canoe, and a 14-year-old boy goes fishing in his canoe. On the right hand side, a 13-year-old girl grinds maize (corn) for tortillas, and a 14-year-old girl is weaving.

Aztec discipline

For Aztec children, discipline was very strict, both at home and at school. Punishments included being speared with the sharp spines of a cactus, being left bound and naked in the dark in a cold puddle, or being bound and held over a fire to inhale smoke from burning chillies. Girls were awakened in the middle of the night to sweep the house, and had their fingers cut if they made a mistake in tasks such as weaving. These stories may have been exaggerated by the Spanish, but certainly discipline was physical. Children were being prepared for an unforgiving world dominated by demanding gods.



APPLY 16.3

- 1 Why do you think the Spanish may have exaggerated stories about the Aztec's discipline of children?

Source 16.14
Illustrations from the 16th-century Codex Mendoza shows punishments for disregarding parental advice: being forced to inhale dry chilli smoke and being forced to lie on damp ground with bound hands and feet.

Religious beliefs

Religion played a very important part in Aztec society. The Aztecs worshipped a variety of gods, some of which were adopted from conquered tribes.

- Huitzilopochtli, the god of the sun and of war. The Aztecs believed that Huitzilopochtli battled with the forces of darkness every night so that the sun would come up the next morning. If ever he grew weak the sun would not rise and the universe would come to an end, so man had to provide nourishment for him in the form of blood sacrifice.
- Tlaloc, the god of rain, agricultural fertility and water. Tlaloc was welcomed as a god who gave life and sustenance, but he was also feared for his ability to send hail, thunder and lightning
- Xipe Totec, the god of springtime and new crops. Every spring the priests flayed (skinned alive) sacrificial victims and paraded in their skins. This symbolised the annual spring renewal of vegetation or the renewal of the earth's skin.
- Quetzalcoatl, the god of nature, earth and air. The name means 'the feathered serpent god'. The temple of Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacan was decorated with large sculptures of feathered serpents.
- Tezcatlipoca, the god of the night sky, giver and taker of all life on earth.
- Mictlantecuhtli, the god of the dead.



Source 16.15
A drawing of the god Quetzalcoatl 'the feathered serpent god' from the Codex Borbonicus

The Aztecs believed in life after death. The way that Aztecs died, rather than the way they lived, decided what would happen to them in the afterlife. If a person died a normal death, his or her soul would pass through the nine levels of the underworld before reaching Mictlan, the realm of the death god. However, warriors who died in battle and women who died in childbirth joined Huitzilopochtli. The dead were buried with goods of all descriptions that would be of use to them in the next life.

Human sacrifices

Most human sacrifices were performed in honour of the gods of the sun, rain and earth. The most common form of sacrifice among the Aztecs involved stretching the victim over a sacrificial stone. Four priests held the limbs of the victim while another priest cut open the chest and took out the heart. The heart was placed in *chacmool* (see Source 16.18) and the victim was then thrown down the steep temple stairs. The body was picked up and part of it, such as the thigh, was given as a reward to the victim's captor, to eat. Those who were sacrificed were considered to be fortunate, since they were guaranteed a place in the highest heaven reserved for warriors who died in battle.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Sometimes human sacrifice was carried out on a massive scale. In 1487, when the temple of Huitzilopochtli was finished, as many as 20 000 captives were sacrificed. A companion of the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés counted 136 000 skulls on the rack that stood beside the same temple in 1519.



Source 16.16 A stone sculpture of the god Huitzilopochtli, c. 1500



Source 16.17 A knife used by Aztec priests for human sacrifices



Source 16.18 An Aztec *chacmool* – a reclining human figure with a sacrificial tray on his lap, where the hearts of sacrificed victims were placed

LIFE IN TENOCHTITLAN – THE AZTEC CAPITAL

Tenochtitlan was founded around 1325 in the Valley of Mexico, now the site of modern-day Mexico City. As the power of the Aztec Empire grew, the entire urban area of Tenochtitlan was carefully rebuilt. By 1519, it housed 200 000 inhabitants on an island of about eight square kilometres. This was at a time when Spain's largest city, Seville, had a population of 70 000.

The rebuilt city was laid out on a grid pattern, with 'roads' running north-south and east-west (see Sources 16.2 and 16.19). In Aztec mythology each of the four main points of the compass had important religious significance, each with its own gods, rituals and colours. Because it mirrored the path of the sun, the east-west axis was the most important one.

Many of Tenochtitlan's 'roads' were in fact canals. Six major canals – and many smaller ones – criss-crossed the entire city. It was possible to travel virtually anywhere in the city by boat. The city was divided into four districts. Each district was composed of neighbourhoods called *calpulli*, inhabited by commoners such as craftspeople and farmers. The crops cultivated by farmers included maize (corn), tomatoes, potatoes, beans, chillies, peanuts, limes and avocados. They farmed on an ingenious system of artificial islands called *chinampas*, built on the shallow parts of the lake and joined together. Canoes took sewage from the city's public toilets to be used as fertiliser on the *chinampas*.

The centre of commerce was the huge market square, where 60 000 people a day came to buy and sell. There was a sacred precinct in the centre of the city, surrounded by walls to limit access to ordinary people. Within this precinct were temples, public buildings, palaces, and plazas. Over everything, the Great Temple or Templo Mayor loomed. The blood on its stairs from human sacrifices was visible from a great distance.



STRANGE BUT TRUE

According to legend, the Aztecs were guided to the site on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco by their chief god Huitzilopochtli. It was pointed out to the Aztecs by an eagle sitting on a cactus (Tenochtitlan means 'the place of the prickly pear cactus').

Source 16.19 A copy of an illustration taken from a manuscript shows the *chinampa* system used by the Aztecs to construct the city of Tenochtitlan.

EXTEND 16.2

- 1 Conduct research about the Aztecs *chinampas*, and draw a labelled diagram to show the methods used to construct them.



- 1 The *Templo Mayor* (Great Temple) dominated the city. Huge numbers of people – and sometimes animals – were sacrificed at an altar atop this pyramid to please the gods.



- 2 A popular game involved the use of elbows, knees and hips to flick a rubber ball through a stone hoop on the wall. Sometimes the defeated team lost their lives as well as the game!



- 3 Maize (corn), the staple food of the Aztecs, was ground into a coarse flour to make tortillas, flat bread to wrap around vegetables and meat.



Source 16.20 An artist's impression of daily life in Tenochtitlan.

- 4 A poor farming family's home on a *chinampa* (artificial island) was made of mud brick, and its roof was made of reeds.
- 5 The markets were the lively centre of the city. Merchants travelled great distances to the markets, by foot or canoe, to sell goods such as feathers, rubber, animal skins and foodstuffs.
- 6 Nobles dressed elaborately, with colourful clothing, jewellery and headdresses. For the poor, clothing for men was typically a length of plain cloth wrapped around the body and knotted on one shoulder. Women wrapped a piece of cloth around their hips and legs (much like a skirt), and added a loose top.

REVIEW 16.3

- 1 Draw a diagram that shows the social hierarchy in Aztec society.
- 2 Why did Aztec warriors capture, rather than kill, enemy warriors?
- 3 Outline the role of men and women in Aztec society.
- 4 What were some of the punishments given to Aztec children who did not perform their tasks properly or were disobedient?
- 5 What did the Aztecs believe would happen if sacrifices were not made to Huitzilopchtli?
- 6 Explain the meaning of these terms: *calpulli*, *chacmool*, *chinampa*.

16.1

CHECKPOINT

In these Rich Tasks, you will be learning and applying the following historical skills:

- » Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts
- » Analysis and use of sources
- » Perspectives and interpretations
- » Research
- » Explanation and communication.

For more information about these skills, refer to 'The historian's toolkit'.

CHECKPOINT

WHAT WERE KEY FEATURES OF SOCIETIES IN THE AMERICAS BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE SPANISH?

» Locate and identify the major civilisations and cities of the pre-Columbian Americas

- 1 On a blank map of the Americas, use shading and labels to show the territories of the Maya, Aztec and Inca civilisations. Add the locations of key cities for each civilisation. (3 marks)

» Outline the organisation of society in pre-Columbian Americas

- 2 Identify the people at the top of the social hierarchy in the Maya, Aztec and Inca societies. (2 marks)
- 3 Outline the different groups in Aztec society, in order of highest to lowest status. What were their roles or occupations? (5 marks)
- 4 Explain the differing roles of men and women in Aztec society. Refer to sources in your response. (5 marks)

» Describe the beliefs of the Aztec society

- 5 Explain Aztec beliefs about the role of gods, including examples. (10 marks)
- 6 What did Aztecs believe about death? (5 marks)
- 7 Explain how their religious beliefs influenced Aztec rituals and warfare. (5 marks)

» Describe key aspects of Pre-Columbian life in the Aztec city Tenochtitlan

- 8 Describe the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan, including aspects of daily life for its inhabitants. Use images and sketches to illustrate your response. (15 marks)

TOTAL MARKS [/50]

RICH TASKS

Investigating Aztec culture and daily life

- 1 In your group, allocate one or two aspects of Aztec life and culture to each student to research individually. Present the results of your research to the rest of the group and share your presentation and source material. Examples of topics to investigate include:
 - agriculture
 - calendars and related beliefs
 - daily life of rich and poor Aztecs, including clothing, housing, food and leisure
 - trade and commerce, including valued products
 - warfare, including weapons and tactics
 - gods and religious rituals.

Sacrifice at the Great Temple

- 1 Write an account of the sacrifice depicted in Source 16.21, from the perspective of one of the Aztecs nobles watching the ritual.



Source 16.21 An illustration of a ritual killing from the Codex Magliabechiano, showing victims being sacrificed on the steps of a temple

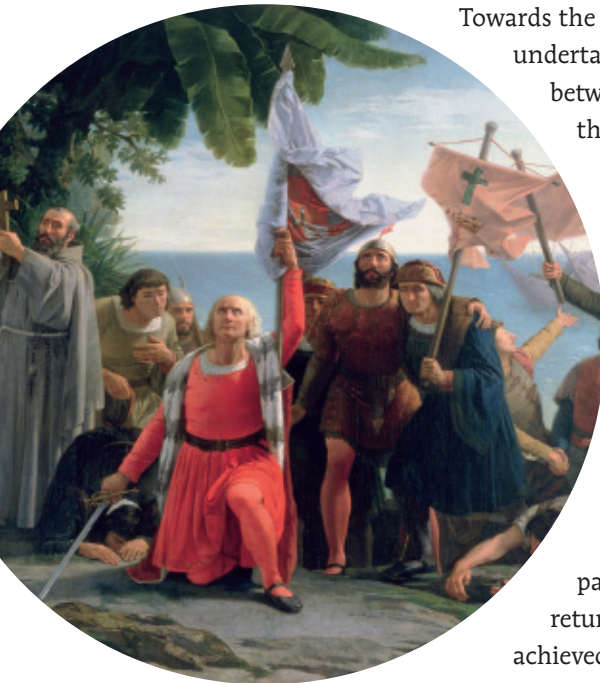
16.2

SECTION

WHAT IMPACT DID THE SPANISH CONQUEST HAVE ON THE AMERICAS?

The discovery of lands in the Caribbean by Christopher Columbus started a wave of exploration and conquest throughout the Americas. Many hundreds of thousands of Indigenous peoples died through disease and warfare, and their traditions and cultures were almost entirely lost.

OVERVIEW OF SPANISH CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT IN THE AMERICAS



Towards the end of the 15th century, great voyages of exploration were being undertaken by the Portuguese and the Spanish, as they sought new sea routes between Europe and Asia. While the Portuguese sailed southward towards the tip of Africa, the Spanish looked to the west, across the Atlantic Ocean. Explorers such as Christopher Columbus (an Italian commissioned by the Spanish royalty) were eager to reach the fabled lands of Cathay (China) and Cipango (Japan).

On 3 August 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail from Palos in Spain with three ships – the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria* – hoping to find a shortcut to the ‘spice islands’ of the East Indies. In October of that year, however, he landed in the Caribbean islands that are the present-day Bahamas, Cuba and Haiti. He thought that Cuba was Cipango (Japan) or perhaps part of the mainland of Asia. In further voyages between 1493 and 1504, he landed on other islands in the Caribbean, and searched the Orinoco River in South America for a fabled passage into the Pacific Ocean. Having failed to find the passage, Columbus returned home in poor health. He died in 1506, still believing that he had achieved his aim of discovering a western route to Asia.

Source 16.22

An artist's impression of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas

Spanish exploration and conquests – key events

After the journeys of Columbus, more than 200 ships brought other explorers and wealth-seekers from Spain to the Caribbean between 1506 and 1518. Spain sent *conquistadors* – conquerors such as Hernán Cortés and Francesco Pizarro, who took huge risks to explore new territories in the hope of enormous reward. Source 16.23 outlines key events in the Spanish exploration and conquests in the New World.

EXTEND 16.3

- 1 Conduct further research on the life of Columbus. Then write an obituary for him in which you assess his personality and achievements.

Source 16.23 Spanish exploration and conquests – key events

1492	Columbus establishes a settlement at Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic), which becomes a launching ground for subsequent Spanish expeditions.
1508–1510	Puerto Rico and Jamaica captured, settlement established in Panama
1511	Cuba invaded by Diego Velázquez
1513	Florida, on the northern coast of the Caribbean, is discovered but not colonised by Juan Ponce de Leon
1517–18	The Yucatán Peninsula, the lands of the Maya, are discovered by Hernández de Córdoba Mexico's east coast explored by Juan de Grijalva, who brought back gold trinkets and stories of rich and civilised tribes in the interior
1518–21	An expedition led by Hernán Cortés reaches the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan. His soldiers are driven out of the city in 1521, but with the help of Aztec allies the Spanish capture and destroy the city. This marks the end of the Aztec Empire.
1522	Colonies established in Venezuela ('little Venice'), in South America
1528	The Inca coastline of South America is explored by Francisco Pizarro.
1530–33	Francisco Pizarro sails from Panama with a force of 180 men to conquer the Inca lands. Pizarro's forces capture the Inca ruler and sack the Inca's largest city of Cuzco. Resistance to the Spanish invaders finally ends in 1572.

Spain's government and its people were motivated to explore and conquer new territories in the Americas for several reasons, outlined in Source 16.25

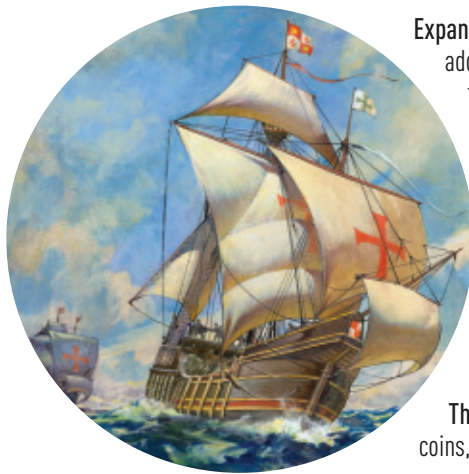


Source 16.24 Aztec gold jewellery

EXTEND 16.4

- 1 Conduct research to complete a table similar to Source 16.23, to outline Spanish exploration and conquests in North America.

Source 16.25 Reasons for Spanish exploration and conquest



Expanding empires: The Spanish and other European powers sought to expand their power and wealth by adding new colonies to their empires. New colonies created wealth for empires through increased trade and taxation, and by using the labour of indigenous peoples.

New trade routes: Explorers searched for new trade routes to reach China and the Indies by sea.

Spreading Christianity: Supported by the Pope, the Spanish and other explorers wanted to convert pagan peoples (those who did not worship the Christian god) to Christianity.

The lure of adventure and riches: Younger sons of the nobility who would not inherit property and men from ordinary families became conquistadors in the hope of finding adventure and wealth, both for the Spanish Empire and for themselves.

The quest for gold: In the 15th century, there was an increased European demand for gold to make coins, jewellery and gold thread for tapestries.

APPLY 16.4

- 1 The Tainos society on Hispaniola, Spain's first settlement in the region, were wiped out as a result of their treatment by Spanish colonisers. In a group, conduct research to find out the impact of Spanish colonisation of the societies of present-day Venezuela, the Yucatan Peninsula and the Caribbean islands mentioned in Source 16.23.

REVIEW 16.4

- 1 Which island did Columbus mistake for Japan?
- 2 Explain why the Americas were not named for Columbus.
- 3 How long did it take the Spanish to conquer the Aztec and Inca civilisations following the discovery of the Americas?

APPLY 16.5

- 1 Use a graphic organiser, that includes illustrations, to explain the reasons for Spanish exploration and conquest.



Source 16.26 Hernán Cortés

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Cortés was also instructed to find the Amazons, a fabled race of warrior women said to live in the region. He was also sent to find out if it were true that there were people with gigantic ears or faces of dogs.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Initially, Spanish horses were a terrifying sight to the Aztecs. It is said that the first Native American to see an unhorsed Spaniard fled, believing that the strange animal had come apart to form two separate beings.

THE EXPEDITION OF CORTÉS TO TENOCHTITLAN

Hernán Cortés was chosen by the governor of Cuba to lead an expedition to the mainland of South America. Like other *conquistadors*, Cortés had come to the West Indies to escape the poverty of his home town in Spain and to seek fame and fortune. In 1519, he set sail with 11 ships and 530 *conquistadors* – including 30 crossbowmen and 12 men armed with arquebuses (an early form of rifle) and cannon. They also took 16 horses and several large fighting dogs. Cortés intended to conquer and colonise on behalf of the king of Spain and in the name of Christianity. His intent was also to find the strait that separated the ‘island’ of Yucatán from the ‘mainland’ in the hope of finding a route to Asia, as it was still believed that China and India were close by, towards the west.

The expedition landed at present-day San Juan de Ulua on the eastern coast of Mexico. Here, the *conquistadors* heard tales of the powerful Aztec king called Montezuma, who ruled from his capital at Tenochtitlan, high in the mountains and several days’ march from the coast. When news reached Montezuma that strangers had landed on the coast, he was unsure how to deal with them, not knowing whether the newcomers were men or gods. He sent splendid gifts, including gold trinkets in the shapes of various animals, a snake’s head made of gold with eyes inlaid with precious stones, and two huge discs as big as cartwheels, one of gold and one of silver and covered with figures and designs. Along with these gifts he sent a message that it would be impossible for the Spaniards to see him and he tried to dissuade them from attempting to come to the capital.

In Aztec culture, giving lavish gifts was a sign of power. Montezuma’s first splendid gifts were intended to show his dominance of Cortés. However, Cortés would have interpreted the gifts as signs of weakness or an attempt to bribe the Spanish. In return, he sent small gifts such as glass ornaments, bracelets and an embroidered cap. These simple gifts were designed to insult Montezuma.

APPLY 16.6

- 1 Draw cartoons of Montezuma and Cortés, with speech bubbles that show their reactions to the gifts they received from each other. Remember to think from the perspective of both the giver and the recipient of the gifts.

The *conquistadors’* journey to Tenochtitlan

The distance to Tenochtitlan from San Juan de Ulua was around 400 kilometres. Cortés first moved up the coast to establish a settlement and entered the territory of the Totonac people, who were subjects of the Aztecs. The Totonacs promised to support Cortés in an overthrow of their Aztec masters (the support of tribes who resented the domination of the Aztecs was an important aspect of Spanish conquest). Cortés set out for Tenochtitlan in August 1519 with a force of around 300 *conquistadors* and 800 Totonacs.

The climate was hot and humid, and the first part of their journey was through a flat, heavily forested region, dotted with maize plantations. The land then rose sharply to 1800 metres, where the climate was milder. The next stage was over a cold, bleak plain dominated by a large salt lake. Between the plain and Tenochtitlan, was a chain of high mountains that included the volcanoes Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, both over 5000 metres high. A pass lay between them at around 4000 metres, after which the land fell away to a valley, and the great lake and the city of Tenochtitlan. Cortés passed through this valley in the summer, when rain fell every afternoon. The paths were deep in mud and rest stops were impracticable.

The *conquistadors'* journey to Tenochtitlan

SOURCE STUDY



Source 16.27 A satellite image of Mexico showing the conquistador's landing point on the gulf coast of Mexico at present-day San Juan de Ulua, and their destination: the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, now the site of present-day Mexico City



Source 16.28 Mount Iztaccihuatl (right) and Mount Popocatepetl (left). Between these two volcanoes is a high pass known as the Paso de Cortés.

INTERPRET 16.2

- 1 Use Sources 16.27 and 16.28 to sketch a map showing the route taken by Cortés, including mountain ranges and other natural features along the way. Add labels to describe these natural features and how they would have influenced or affect the *conquistadors'* journey.
- 2 Use Google Earth or a digital atlas to explore the region through which the *conquistadors* travelled. Suggest which features of the landscape would be unchanged since the time of the journeys of Cortés, and which features would have changed.

REVIEW 16.5

- 1 What was the main purpose of the expedition led by Cortés in 1519?
- 2 Why did Montezuma send gifts to Cortés when he arrived on the Mexican coast?
- 3 Why did the Totonacs support the Spaniards?

THE SPANISH CONQUEST OF THE AZTEC EMPIRE

Tenochtitlan fell to the forces of Cortés two years after his arrival on Aztec territory. The Spanish had the advantage of superior weaponry. Their cause was also aided by the devastating effects of a European disease, and by the tribes who became allies of the Spanish.

First conflicts

The first conflict between the *conquistadors* and native tribes took place when the Spanish encountered and fought the Tlaxcalans, whose territories lay midway between the coast and Tenochtitlan. After being defeated, the Tlaxcalans agreed to become allies and march



to Tenochtitlan. Cortés then reached Cholula, a town close to the high mountains, where Cortés stayed for several days. The Cholulans were allies of the Aztecs and were planning to ambush and capture the *conquistadors* on the road. Cortés learned of the plan and summoned the Cholulan leaders. They arrived unarmed to the temple courtyard, where they were slaughtered by the Spaniards. The Aztecs would have heard about this treatment of their Cholulan allies, before the conquistadors reached Tenochtitlan.

The first allies of Cortés, the Totonacs, now returned to their homes laden with gifts from the Spaniards, and Cortés left Cholula with a force of around 1000 Tlaxcalans. He chose to cross the mountains over the most difficult pass (now known as Paso Cortés), to surprise the Aztecs.

Source 16.29 An artist's impression of *conquistadors* slaughtering the Indigenous population at Cholula in central Mexico

The conquistadors in Tenochtitlan

The *conquistadors* reached Tenochtitlan in November 1519. Montezuma met Cortés on the causeway (a raised path) leading into the city. He believed Cortés had been sent by the god Quetzalcoatl, but he soon realised that the Spaniards were actually after land and treasure. As relations became less friendly, Cortés took Montezuma as a hostage and sent expeditions into the countryside in search of gold, while he continued to amass any treasure he could find in Tenochtitlan.

In May 1520, while Cortés was out of the city, the Spaniards massacred a group of Aztec nobles during a festival (see Source 16.30). This led to an uprising of the city's inhabitants, and Cortés returned to find that the *conquistadors* had lost control of the city. Montezuma is thought to have been killed by the crowds at this time. In July, the Spaniards tried to quietly withdraw from Tenochtitlan in the middle of the night. However, they were discovered and their withdrawal became a desperate fight to escape. Cortés escaped unharmed, but hundreds of Spaniards and Tlaxcalans were killed.

The Aztecs believed the Spanish threat was over. Soon after they had driven the invaders out, however, smallpox swept through the population. Smallpox and other diseases were introduced to the Americas by European explorers and settlers. Many European diseases were deadly to the native population who had no natural immunity to them. The smallpox epidemic of 1520 had a devastating effect on the Aztecs, quickly killing around a quarter of the population. One of the casualties was Montezuma's successor as Aztec ruler, Cuitláhuac.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

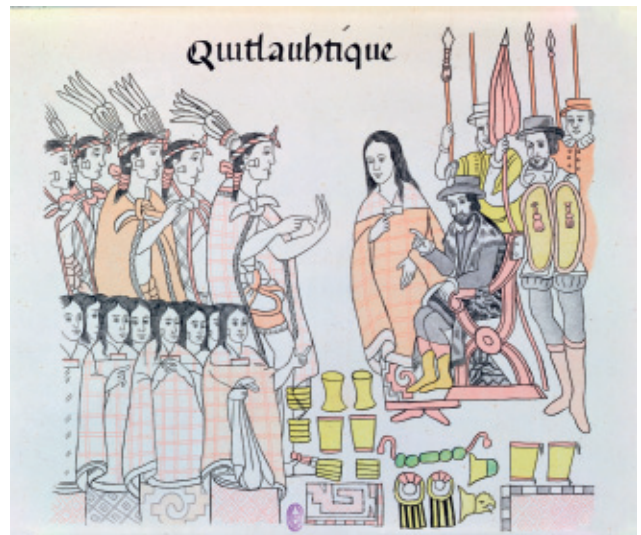
In one account of Montezuma's death, amidst the fighting he went to the palace rooftop to appeal for peace on the urging of Cortés. They responded with a shower of stones, several of which hit Montezuma, and he died from his wounds.

The conquistadors in Tenochtitlan

SOURCE STUDY



Source 16.30 An illustration of the massacre of Aztec nobles during a festival from the Codex Ixtlilxochitl



Source 16.32 A 19th-century illustration depicts a meeting between Cortés and Montezuma. The woman acting as an interpreter is Doña Marina, known as La Malinche.

Source 16.31

On the second day [of the festival] they began to sing again, but without warning they were all put to death. The dancers and singers were completely unarmed. They brought only their embroidered cloaks ... their necklaces, their clusters of heron feathers, their trinkets made of deer hooves ... The Spaniards attacked the musicians first, slashing at their hands and faces until they had killed all of them. The singers – and even the spectators – were also killed. This slaughter in the Sacred Patio went on for three hours ... The king Motecuhzoma [Montezuma]... protested: 'Our lords, that is enough! What are you doing? These people are not carrying shields or macanas [wooden clubs]. Our lords, they are completely unarmed!'... [the massacre took place] on the twentieth day after the captain [Cortés] left for the coast. We allowed the Captain to return to the city in peace. But on the following day we attacked him with all our might, and that was the beginning of the war.

An Aztec account of the slaughter of warriors during a festival

INTERPRET 16.3

- 1 Describe the scene shown in Source 16.32 and suggest what the women and items at the bottom of the illustration are. What does this source tell us about the first contact experience between Spanish and Aztec leaders at Tenochtitlan?
- 2 Describe the scene shown in Source 16.30.
- 3 Read Source 16.31. Does this account support the evidence provided in Source 16.30?

EXTEND 16.5

- 1 La Malinche was a noblewoman from a native tribe who was given to the Spaniards as a slave. She acted as an interpreter between Cortés and Montezuma at their first meeting, and became the mistress of Cortés. Conduct research to write a brief biography of La Malinche. Include sources that show different perspectives about her role in the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire.



Source 16.33

A 16th-century illustration of an Aztec warrior from the *Historia de las cosas de Nueva Espana*. The warrior carries a wooden club and a shield made from feathers, agave paper, leather and reed.

The defeat of the Aztecs and destruction of Tenochtitlan

After escaping from the city, the Spaniards retreated to the territory of their Tlaxcalan allies. Cortés rested his army for 20 days, then set off on a campaign to conquer Aztec allies in the surrounding regions. This was the most brutal campaign conducted by Cortés. He won over half of the Aztecs territories, with the native peoples supporting the *conquistadors* through fear. An estimated 15 000 to 20 000 people died in battle; women and children were enslaved and some captives were given to the Tlaxcalans for human sacrifice and to cannibalise. Other tribes joined the Spaniards willingly, to help throw off the rule of their Aztec overlords.

In May 1521, Cortés returned to Tenochtitlan and laid siege to the city with a force of 550 Spaniards and 10 000 Tlaxcalan. As well as executing daily attacks, he used boats to cut off the city from supplies of food, and destroyed the aqueduct that brought fresh water into the city.

The Aztecs, who were already vulnerable after the smallpox epidemic, were finally overcome after a three-month siege. Cortés

had originally intended to preserve Tenochtitlan and offer it to the Spanish king as a prize. However, after months of bombardment by Spanish cannons, the once-great city lay in ruins. Stones from the temples, pyramids and palaces were used to build churches and government buildings. The canals that criss-crossed the city were filled in.

Reasons for Spanish success

Historians estimate that around 100 000 Aztecs and about 100 Spaniards were killed during the three months when Cortés laid siege to Tenochtitlan. Tens of thousands of Aztecs and other peoples had also been killed in his campaigns. In contrast, the Spanish lost less than 1000 of the 1800 *conquistadors* who came to Mexico between 1519 and 1521. The success of the Spanish in battle and widely differing casualties were a consequence of the superior technology and weapons of the Spaniards, the fierceness of their tribal allies who were enemies of the Aztecs, and the different fighting methods of the Aztec and Spanish.

Source 16.34 Spanish advantages over the Aztecs

	Spanish	Aztec
Weapons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Spaniards used steel for their armour and weapons. The Spaniards used gunpowder with powerful cannons and firearms. The use of horses gave the conquistadors some advantage – before the Spanish came the Aztecs had never seen horses and were initially frightened of them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Aztecs fought with wooden clubs and swords made of obsidian, a hard but brittle form of volcanic rock which broke against the armour and swords of the conquistadors.
Battle tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conquistadors were well trained in disciplined military manoeuvres. A smaller Spanish force could defeat a larger Aztec force as long as they could maintain their energy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Aztecs had a tradition of running at their enemies head on. This meant that only the front ranks could fight, to be replaced by rear ranks as they were cut down.
Fighting traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Spanish killed enemies from a distance with cannons and guns, retreated when battles were being lost, and attacked villages at night when the inhabitants were asleep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Aztec warriors, killing from a distance was not honourable. Battles were highly organised and fought hand-to-hand. The Aztecs were also used to wounding their opponents rather than killing (to capture them for sacrifice). This would often give the Spaniards a chance to escape from battle and fight another day.

The defeat of the Aztecs

SOURCE STUDY

Source 16.35

[the Aztec ruler Cuauhtemoc] would prefer to die where he was rather than on any account appear before me ... The people of the city had to walk upon their dead while others swam or drowned in the waters of that wide lake where they had their canoes; indeed, so great was their suffering that it was beyond our understanding how they could endure it. Countless numbers of men, women and children came out toward us, and in their eagerness to escape many were pushed into the water where they drowned amid that multitude of corpses; and it seemed that more than fifty thousand had perished from the salt water they had drunk, their hunger and the vile stench. So that we should not discover the plight which they were in, they dared neither throw these bodies into the water ... nor throw them [out of the city] where the soldiers might see them; and so in those streets where they were, they came across such piles of the dead that we were forced to walk upon them ...

Extract from a letter by Hernan Cortés, describing the end of the siege of Tenochtitlan, in *Letters from Mexico*, Anthony Pagden (ed.), Anthony Pagden (trans.), Yale University Press, 1986, pp. 263–264.

INTERPRET 16.4

- 1 Examine Source 16.36 and identify the advantages that the Spanish had in fighting the Aztecs depicted in the illustration.
- 2 In Source 16.35, what was Cortés referring to that was beyond understanding?
- 3 According to Cortés, what were the causes of death of the besieged Aztecs? What Spanish actions were these a consequence of?
- 4 Write an account of the end of the siege of Tenochtitlan from the perspective of an Aztec survivor, then from the perspective of one of a Spanish soldier.



Source 16.36 A 19th-century illustration of the final battle between Cortés and Aztec ruler Cuauhtémoc at Tenochtitlan in August 1521

REVIEW 16.6

- 1 Which tribes were allies of the Spanish?
- 2 Why did Montezuma greet Cortés in peace when the Spaniards arrived in Tenochtitlan?
- 3 Describe the incident that caused the Aztecs in Tenochtitlan to rise against the Spaniards in 1520.
- 4 Outline the tactics used by Cortés in his successful siege of Tenochtitlan.

THE IMPACT OF SPANISH CONQUEST AND COLONISATION IN THE AMERICAS

The impact of the Spanish conquest of the Americas cannot be underestimated. The arrival of Europeans would lead to the downfall of Indigenous groups throughout the region.

The Spanish settlement of Mexico

The destruction of Tenochtitlan by Cortés marked the beginning of 300 years of Spanish rule in the former Aztec Empire. From Tenochtitlan, Cortés sent expeditions out in all directions to expand Spanish settlement. Territories were divided up and ruled by Cortés, his Spanish companions and even a few Aztecs who had become Christians, such as the son and daughter of Montezuma. Each town was governed by a *conquistador*, who was meant to ensure that the Indigenous peoples under his protection became Christians and good subjects of the Spanish king. In return, he required their payment of a tribute and their services.

A remarkable characteristic of Spanish settlement was the part played by Indigenous peoples, including Tlaxcalans and Aztecs. Their leaders were permitted to ride horses and dress as the Spanish did, and they played an important role in bringing outlying tribes under the rule of New Spain. In two to three generations, their descendants became indistinguishable in habits and speech from the grandchildren of *conquistadors*.

Spanish treatment of the conquered Aztecs

In contrast to the way some native leaders were treated once they had conquered the Aztec Empire, the Spanish treated the ordinary people very badly. Under the Spanish, the Aztecs lost their land and independence. The Spanish saw the new territory as a source of great potential wealth. That wealth could only be created through the labour of the population. Natives were given to soldiers, officers and other important Spaniards under a system called the *encomienda*. In theory, the Spaniards were supposed to protect the Native Americans, teach them Spanish and convert them to Christianity. In practice, the Native Americans were usually just treated as slaves. The Spanish were greedy for gold and silver to ship back to Spain. In addition to looting the society, the Spanish forced Indigenous peoples to work in the gold and silver mines of the Americas, where they were brutally treated and sometimes worked to death.

The expansion of the Spanish Empire

The defeat of the Aztecs by Cortés encouraged other *conquistadors* in their dreams of conquest and wealth. In the 1530s and 1540s, the Indigenous peoples in the regions formerly controlled by the Inca Empire and the Maya were treated as brutally as the Aztecs. The Spanish Empire became one of the greatest trading empires of the early modern world, which lasted until the end of the 19th century.

Source 16.37

By 1550, Spain dominated the lands and peoples around the Caribbean, and deep into both North and South America: a domain more than ten times larger than Spain itself. The approximately twenty million or more Indians they encountered dwarfed the seven million Spaniards at home. In extent and population, and cultural diversity, the Spanish empire in the Americas exceeded even the ancient Roman, previously the standard of imperial power.

Extract from Michael McDonnell, 'The "conquest" of the Americas: The Aztecs', at *American History for Australian Schools* website

The wider impact of Spanish conquest in the Americas

European diseases

Before the arrival of the Spanish, civilisations in the Americas had never been exposed to people from beyond their region. This meant that they had no immunity to diseases that were common in Europe. The Spanish, in contrast, came from a continent that had been ravaged by epidemics (widespread contagious diseases) for hundreds of years. Most Europeans had some immunity to diseases such as smallpox, measles and influenza. When these diseases accompanied the *conquistadors* to the Americas, outbreaks among Indigenous peoples severely reduced their populations. There were major outbreaks of smallpox in the 1520s, measles from 1531 to 1532, influenza in 1545 and 1576, as well as the spread of plague, whooping cough and mumps. It has been estimated that the Indigenous populations in Spanish colonies dropped from 8 million in 1518 to 2.6 million in the 1560s. Some have argued that the effect of these diseases in the Caribbean and South America was worse than that of the Black Death in Europe in the 14th century. It has been claimed that 90 per cent of the inhabitants of the Inca Empire died from introduced diseases.



Source 16.38 A drawing from the Florentine Codex depicts Indigenous people infected with smallpox. The drawing was made by Bernardino de Sahagún, a 16th-century Spanish missionary.

Forced labour and slavery

As early as 1493, the Indigenous peoples in the Americas learned what it was to lose their freedom. In the settlement of Hispaniola, the hard work was done by the native Taino people. The *conquistadors* raped women, enslaved men, imposed unjust punishments and insisted on being provided with gold. When Taino chiefs protested, they were overthrown, transported or killed. The Indigenous population in the Caribbean was reduced to almost nothing in two generations. Traditional agriculture was destroyed and the local people were worked to death in the search for gold. In smaller, 'useless' islands the natives were enslaved and moved to the larger colonies as labour. Perhaps 200 000 died in the four largest Caribbean islands in a quarter of a century. As we have seen, people from the conquered Aztec and Inca societies were also treated as slaves by their Spanish 'protectors'.

The spread of Christianity

After conquest, priests came to set up the Catholic Church in Mexico and other colonies, and carried out thousands of conversions. The rapid conversion to Christianity was remarkable, with hundreds of thousands of Native Americans becoming Catholics. Spanish colonies were soon covered in a network of monasteries, churches, shrines and parishes. Out of sight of the priests, many Indigenous peoples continued to worship the old gods, but without the element of human sacrifice.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

While the effect of European diseases cannot be underestimated, recent research has suggested that a major disease that dramatically affected the population may have been a home-grown variety. The Aztec name for this disease was *Cocoliztli*, and modern scientists have identified it as a form of Ebola, spread by rats.

APPLY 16.7

- 1 Conduct research and write a short report about one of the wider impacts of Spanish conquest on the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Include relevant sources.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Because he was convinced that he had reached the coastline of Asia, Columbus never realised – nor was it recognised by anyone during his lifetime – that he had found a new continent. This honour went to the Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci who made three voyages to the New World and wrote about his discovery. 'America' (both North and South) was named for him in 1507.

Agriculture and food

From 1522, Cortés brought in European domestic animals – such as cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and mules – from the West Indies to the mainland of the Americas. Native Americans were introduced to the horse by the Spanish. Cortés also imported sugar cane, mulberry trees for silkworms, vines, olives and wheat.

European learning and technologies

The conquered peoples adapted fast to the new European ways, learning Latin script, the use of the wheel and pulley, employing wax candles for illumination, and working with mules and oxen. They also found out about the advantages of working with metal nails and screws.

The longer-term effects of Spanish colonisation

The colonisation of the New World

Explorers from other countries were motivated by Spain's success in finding wealth and new land in the Americas. The initial voyage of Christopher Columbus started a wave of exploration in North and South America by the British, French and Dutch. Spain's great rival, Portugal, also set up colonies in the Americas. Eventually the entire continent came under the control of colonial powers.

Population change, language and religion

Spanish colonisation dramatically changed the ethnic make-up of the Americas. First, many of the Indigenous populations were killed by disease. Then, many Spaniards migrated to the Americas after colonisation had begun. Approximately 240 000 moved to the Americas in the 16th century, and another 500 000 in the following century.

One of the legacies of the *conquistadors* was the spread of the Spanish language, which is by far the most common language in Latin America now. In fact, it is the second-most widely spoken language in the world, after Mandarin. Brazil's main language, however, is Portuguese. This can be traced back to the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, which stated that all lands discovered west of a line drawn down the Atlantic Ocean should belong to Spain and all to the east to Portugal.

The Catholic Church also expanded its worldwide influence after Spanish conquest, spreading to distant regions of South America, Africa and the Philippines.

Source 16.39 Today, Spanish is the official language of many nations in the Americas, such as Mexico.



African slave trade

In the Caribbean, the brutal treatment of the local populations meant that most of them died or were not fit to work on the plantations established by the Spanish. To solve this problem, the Spanish brought shiploads of African slaves to work in the Caribbean, and to other parts of the Americas. One impact was the changed ethnic make-up of the population, so that the majority were no longer Indigenous but European and African. A wider impact was the growth of the African slave trade, which became the reason behind one of the great movements of people during the 18th and 19th centuries. It is estimated that around 12 million Africans were captured and brought to the Caribbean, South America and Britain's North American colonies before the trade in humans was finally abolished in the 19th century.



Source 16.40 African slaves at work in the mines of Hispaniola. Africans were first brought to the Caribbean as slaves to replace the native Taino people, many of whom had died from disease and overwork.

The Columbian Exchange

The Columbian Exchange is a term used for the transfer of crops, livestock, people and disease between the Americas and the rest of the world after the arrival of Columbus in the New World. We have already discussed the effect of the introduction of diseases, and new livestock (such as horses and other large domestic animals) that transformed traditional farming practices in the Americas. The most significant changes in other parts of the world resulting from Spanish colonisation were the introduction of new crops to Europe and Asia. Imagine Ireland without potatoes, Italy without tomatoes, Switzerland without chocolate, Thailand without chillies. All these crops were unknown outside the Americas before the Spanish arrived but became very important to the diets of these countries. The foods that were brought from the Americas became important sources of nutrition for European populations. Crops such as potatoes and peanuts allowed more efficient farming. These crops could yield more calories per acre than in the past. In addition, foods such as tomatoes and chilli peppers were a rich source of vitamins. In the Mediterranean, these foods enriched diets and improved the health of the population. These improvements in food helped to trigger population growth in Europe and other regions.



Source 16.41 Maize (corn) and chillies are two examples of foods that were unknown outside the Americas before the travels of Columbus

REVIEW 16.7

- 1 How did the Spanish control the former Aztec Empire after the fall of Tenochtitlan?
- 2 Explain the term *encomienda*.
- 3 How large was the population of Spain's colonies in the Americas compared to the population of Spain itself?
- 4 How much of the Indigenous population is estimated to have died from European diseases?
- 5 List the foods that were brought to Europe from the Americas.

16.2

CHECKPOINT

WHAT IMPACT DID THE SPANISH CONQUEST HAVE ON THE AMERICAS?

» Explain the reasons for Spanish conquest and settlement in the Americas

- 1 Why did Spain and other European countries send expeditions to the Americas? (5 marks)
- 2 What motivated Spanish conquistadors to join expeditions in the Americas? (2 marks)

» Identify the societies that the Spanish conquered in the Americas

- 3 On a blank map of the Americas, add labels to identify five Indigenous societies or locations that were conquered by the Spanish, including significant individuals and dates of key events. (10 marks)

» Describe how geographic features influenced Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire

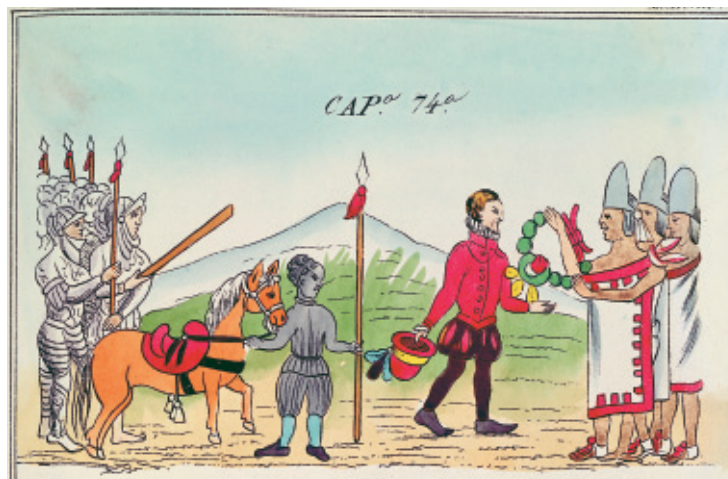
- 4 Describe the geographic features on the overland route taken by Cortés to Tenochtitlan. How did they affect the conquistadors' journey? (5 marks)

» Describe different perspectives on the first-contact experiences between the Spanish and Aztec society

- 5 How did Montezuma react to news of the arrival of Cortés on Aztec territory? Explain this response from the Aztec perspective, then explain how it would have been viewed from the Spanish perspective. (5 marks)
- 6 Describe conflicts between the Spanish and Indigenous peoples on the journey to Tenochtitlan. What were the consequences of these conflicts? (5 marks)
- 7 Refer to Source 16.43 to respond to the following questions.
 - a Describe the first meeting of Cortés and Montezuma at Tenochtitlan in 1519.
 - b Explain the Spanish and Aztec perspectives on the way Montezuma greeted Cortés to his capital.
 - c How does the artist show the Spanish threat to the Aztecs despite the peaceful nature of this meeting? (10 marks)

» Explain how the Spanish conquered and controlled Aztec society

- 8 Explain the tactics used by Cortés to defeat the Aztecs at the siege of Tenochtitlan in 1521. What were the consequences for the city and its inhabitants, and for the Spanish? (5 marks)
- 9 How did Cortés conquer Aztec territories after the fall of Tenochtitlan? (3 marks)
- 10 Explain how the Spanish governed the former Aztec territories. (5 marks)



Source 16.42 A 16th century artist's impression of the meeting of Cortés and Montezuma

» Explain how the Aztecs were affected by the Spanish conquests

11 Explain the Spanish treatment of Indigenous peoples and other changes introduced to the Americas as a result of Spanish conquest. How did this affect their culture and way of life? (5 marks)

» Investigate the wider impact of the Spanish conquests of the Americas

12 Explain the wider impact of one of the following aspects of Spanish conquest in the Americas:

- the introduction of European diseases
- forced labour and slavery in the service of Spanish colonisers
- the spread of Christianity
- the introduction of European crops and livestock
- the introduction of European culture and technologies. (5 marks)

» Assess the long-term effects and legacy of colonisation by the Spanish in the Americas

13 Identify and describe the long-term effects of Spanish colonisation in the Americas. Explain how each has influenced the Americas and the modern world. (10 marks)

TOTAL MARKS [/75]

RICH TASK

Perspectives on the Spanish conquests of the Americas

- 1 Read the following statements and select one. Write an extended response that discusses whether you agree or disagree with your chosen statement.
 - 'In the end, the people of the Americas gained more than they lost by the Spanish conquests.'
 - 'While we may weep for the poor Aztec killed on the battlefield or conscripted into slavery we might also give two cheers for the conquistadors for having purged [rid] the Earth of a vile culture.' (Extract from Tim Stanley, 'Two cheers for the conquistors' at *HistoryToday* website)
- 2 Examine Source 16.43 and describe the activities presented in the painting.
 - a What do you think the artist is saying about the Spanish conquest of the Americas?
 - b Create a photo montage or artwork that represents your own depiction of the events and impact of Spanish conquest of the Americas.



Source 16.43 This 1951 mural by Mexican painter Diego Rivera, titled *The Conquest or Arrival of Hernán Cortés in Veracruz*, shows details of Spain's colonial domination of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico.

In these Rich Tasks, you will be learning and applying the following historical skills:

- » Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts
- » Analysis and use of sources
- » Perspectives and interpretations
- » Research
- » Explanation and communication.

For more information about these skills, refer to 'The historian's toolkit'.

CHECKPOINT