



### The Aztecs Are Conquered

1. Even before the day they met in 1519, Moctezuma and Hernando Cortes knew of each other. Cortés had arrived in Mexico nine months earlier from Cuba. The Spanish had begun establishing colonies on the islands of the Caribbean Sea. Stories of great riches in Mexico encouraged Cortés and other Spaniards to gain some of the Aztecs wealth.
2. Cortes was one of a group of Spanish soldiers who would later be called **conquistadors** or conquistadors. But Cortés faced a major challenge in defeating the Aztecs. His force of about 500 men was greatly outnumbered.
3. However, Cortés did have a few advantages. Metal armor protected the Spanish from the Aztecs' stone weapons. Spanish soldiers had muskets, a kind of rifle. Spanish bullets could easily pierce the cloth suits the Aztecs wore. The conquistadors also had horses. The Aztecs had not seen horses before, and the animals frightened them. One native person said the horses "ran like deer and could catch anyone (the Spanish) told them to."
4. Cortés had allies too. An ally is a friend who will help in a fight. The people that Cortés met on his way to Tenochtitlan did not want to live under Aztec rule. Many of them decided to help Cortés defeat the Aztecs.
5. One ally of Cortés was an Aztec woman called Doña Marina a name she took after becoming a Christian. Doña Marina spoke several indian languages and spoke to the native peoples of Mexico for Cortés. Doña Marina helped Cortés persuade thousands to join him. One Spaniard described Doña Marina as an excellent person, and a good interpreter.

6. An important ally that the Spanish did not know they had was the germ that causes Smallpox. Some historians think thousands of Aztecs caught smallpox after Cortés arrived.
7. At their first meeting in 1519, Moctezuma agreed to let Cortés stay in Tenochtitlan. Almost a year later, the Aztecs rose up and threw the Spanish out of their city. Moctezuma was killed, perhaps by his own people. Cortés escaped. But he returned late in 1520 with many more native peoples as allies. In 1521, the mightiest empire of the Americas fell to the conquistador.

### Founding New Spain

8. In 1535, Spain established the colony of New Spain. The capital of New Spain was Mexico City. Today, Mexico City is the capital of Mexico. Spanish officials came to set up a government, make laws, and build schools and universities. Roman Catholic priests came to **convert** or change, native peoples from their own religion to Christianity.
9. Spanish leaders such as Cortés discouraged native peoples from continuing to sacrifice people to their gods. Colonist also came from Spain. A **colonist** is a person who lives in a colony. Spanish colonists hoped to gain wealth by starting farms, businesses, and gold and silver mines in New Spain.

### The Conquests Continue

10. Ten years after the conquest of Mexico began, Spain sent Francisco Pizarro to South America to conquer the Incan Empire. Pizarro captured the Incan ruler Atahualpa in 1532. The following year, Pizarro's forces captured Cuzco, the Incan capital city. By 1535 Pizarro had founded a new capital called Lima, in a colony called Peru.

