US History Chapter 2 Lesson 2

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| **LESSON 2**  **Spain in America**  **ESSENTIAL QUESTION *What are the consequences when cultures interact?*** | |
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| *The Spanish exploration and settlement brought dramatic change to the Americas.*  **European Explorers and Conquerors**  [*SS.8.A.2.1*](https://connected.mcgraw-hill.com/ssh/AEF83028-CCB8-11DD-A7C8-69619DFF4B22)*,*[*SS.8.A.2.5*](https://connected.mcgraw-hill.com/ssh/AEFD6584-CCB8-11DD-A7C8-69619DFF4B22)  ***What were the goals of early Spanish explorers?***  When Spanish explorers reached the Americas, natives told tales of gold, silver, and kingdoms wealthy beyond belief. The Spanish listened eagerly, and they traveled far and wide in search of these riches.  These explorers, known as **conquistadors** (kahn • KEES • tah • dohrz), got encouragement from Spanish rulers. The rulers gave conquistadors the right to explore and create settlements in the Americas. In return, the conquistadors agreed to give Spain one-fifth of any treasure they found. This deal allowed Spanish rulers to explore the Americas with little risk. If a conquistador failed, he lost his own fortune. If he succeeded, both he and Spain gained wealth and glory.  **The Conquest of Mexico and Peru**  Although many of the tales of gold and riches proved to be false, some were true. Two wealthy empires—the Aztec in what is now Mexico and Central America and the Inca in South America—were among the richest prizes the conquistadors claimed.  In 1519 Hernán Cortés landed on the east coast of present-day Mexico. Within two years, Cortés conquered the Aztec Empire that had ruled the region. Huge amounts of Aztec gold made Cortés and Spain wealthy.  Cortés's success encouraged other conquistadors. Twelve years after the Aztec conquest, Francisco Pizarro led an army into the Inca capital in Cuzco, Peru. The Spanish arrested and later executed the Inca ruler. Without their leader, the Inca were not able to fight effectively. Pizarro soon controlled most of the vast and wealthy Inca Empire. |  |

**Why Spain Won**

The conquistadors' victories over the Aztec and Inca were quick and lasting. How did Cortés and Pizarro conquer such mighty empires with their small forces?

First, the Spanish had weapons and animals the Aztec and Inca had never seen. The Spanish had guns and cannon. They rode horses and had huge, ferocious dogs. To the Native Americans, the Spanish seemed almost like gods. One Aztec recalled the fear that spread at the soldiers' approach: "their weapons clashed and rattled. . . . They terrified everyone who saw them." Cortés got native help in his campaign. Local Native Americans disliked their harsh Aztec rulers and were happy to help overthrow them. Finally, disease played a large role. For many native groups, **contact** with the Europeans was deadly. With no **immunity**, or resistance, to European diseases, the Aztec and the Inca suffered terrible epidemics. Illness and death weakened them in their struggle against the Spanish.

Thinking Like a **HISTORIAN**

**Analyzing Primary Sources**

In 1519 Hernán Cortés prepared to leave Cuba for Mexico with 11 ships carrying about 550 Spanish soldiers and 16 horses. Before setting off, Cortés said to his men:   
"*I know in my heart that we shall take vast and wealthy lands, people such as have never before been seen. . . . If you do not abandon me, as I shall not abandon you, I shall make you in a very short time the richest of all men who have crossed the seas.*"   
—from *The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson   
Based on this quote, what inspired the conquistadors? For more information about analyzing primary sources, read *Thinking Like a Historian.*

**Analyzing** How were the Spanish able to defeat Native American empires?

**Spain in Florida**

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***What led Spanish explorers to Florida?***

Not all the conquistadors won glorious victories or found gold and silver. In fact, those who explored the southeastern and southwestern parts of North America faced a difficult struggle.

On April 2, 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León (PAHN • say day lee • OWN) came ashore on the Florida coast. He claimed the territory for the Spanish crown. Ponce de León found a land full of wildflowers and fragrant plants. The day was Easter, a Christian holiday, so Ponce de León named the land "La Florida." In Spain, Easter is known as Pascua Florida or "Flowery Easter."

According to legend, Ponce de León was not only looking for gold. He also hoped to find the legendary fountain of youth. This had been described by a historian of that time as, "a spring of running water of such marvelous virtue" that drinking it "makes old men young again." Ponce de León never found the fountain.

Still, King Ferdinand of Spain was pleased with Ponce de León's adventures. The king appointed him governor of Florida and asked him to set up a colony there. In 1521 Ponce de León returned to Florida with 200 settlers. However, the Calusa (kuh • LOO • suhz), a Native American people, attacked the expedition. Many Spaniards died in the fighting. Ponce de León himself was seriously injured and died a few days later.

Spain spent many years trying to conquer and settle Florida. In 1528 Pánfilo de Narváez (PAHN • fee • loh day nar • VAH • ays) arrived to start a colony. After landing in the Tampa Bay area his expedition came under attack from a local Native American group, the Apalachee (ap • uh • LACH • ee). The Spaniards tried to fight off the attacks, but the Apalachee forced them to flee by boat across the Gulf of Mexico. You will read more about this ill-fated group shortly.

**France in Florida**

In spite of the troubles in Florida, the Americas provided Spain with great wealth in the early 1500s. Other countries noticed this and wanted to claim similar riches. One of them was France.

France realized Florida was a key location. Spanish treasure ships, loaded with silver from Central America, sailed along Florida's coasts on their way to Spain. If the French controlled Florida, they could capture this rich Spanish cargo.

In 1562 French explorer Jean Ribault (REE • BOH) sailed to the St. Johns River near present-day Jacksonville. He claimed Florida for France and built a stone monument as proof of the French claim to the land. Two years later, a group of French settlers came to Florida to establish a colony. To protect the settlement, the French built a fort along the St. Johns River called Fort Caroline.

**Spain Defends Its Claim**

Although the French claimed Florida, Felipe II, king of Spain, believed they were trespassing on Spanish land. He named Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (muh • NEHN • duhs day ah • vuh • LAYS) governor of Florida. The king ordered Menéndez to build a colony in Florida and to drive out the French.

On September 8, 1565, Menéndez founded the settlement of San Agustín (St. Augustine). Menéndez did not know it then, but St. Augustine was the first permanent European settlement in what would become the United States.

Ribault planned to attack the Spanish. He sent ships south to attack St. Augustine, but a hurricane destroyed many of the boats. Spanish soldiers killed the few survivors who managed to reach shore. Menéndez then sent forces overland to capture Fort Caroline. He ordered his soldiers to kill everyone at the French fort except women, children, and Roman Catholics. This Spanish victory ended France's attempt to control Florida.

**La Florida Grows Slowly**

Menéndez served as governor of La Florida for 10 years. In addition to St. Augustine, Menéndez founded the settlement of Santa Elena in present-day South Carolina and made it the capital of La Florida. Menéndez also set up Catholic missions. The first, *Nombre de Dios*(Name of God), was a few miles north of St. Augustine. The Spanish built more missions and forts in areas that became Florida, the Carolinas, and Virginia.

St. Augustine provided an emergency safe harbor for ships sailing from the Americas to Spain. Colonization in Florida grew slowly, however, and Florida relied on financial help sent from the Spanish government in Mexico City.

***Determining Cause and Effect*** How did the Spanish respond to the French presence in Florida?

**Exploring the Southwest**

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***Why did Spain explore and colonize the American Southwest?***

Many other conquistadors searched for quick riches. Few achieved this goal and some lost their lives trying. One of these conquistadors was Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (cah • BAY • sah day VAH • cah). Cabeza de Vaca was part of the Spanish expedition to Florida in 1528 led by Pánfilo de Narváez.

After fleeing from the Apalachee, the survivors sailed southwest across the Gulf of Mexico. Three of the five boats were lost in a storm.

The two surviving ships went aground on an island near what is now Texas. Within a few months, only a handful of the Spaniards, including Cabeza de Vaca, were still alive. After living for a time among the Native Americans of the area, the survivors set off once more for Mexico. Reaching Mexico in 1536, Cabeza de Vaca talked about what he had seen and heard on his journey. As part of this tale, he described a fantastic place—the seven cities of gold called the "Seven Cities of Cibola."

**The Search for Gold**

Inspired by Cabeza de Vaca's stories, Hernando de Soto set out on an expedition. For three years his group wandered throughout what is now the southeastern United States, seizing food and supplies from Native Americans. In 1541 de Soto crossed the Mississippi River. After reaching what is today Oklahoma, de Soto died of fever.

Francisco Vásquez de Coronado also wanted to find the seven cities of gold. Traveling through northern Mexico and present-day Arizona and New Mexico, his expedition reached a Zuni (ZOO • nee) settlement in 1540. Coronado and his expedition realized at once that there was no gold in the area. Members of the expedition then traveled west to the Colorado River and east into what is now Kansas. They reported that they found nothing but "windswept plains" and strange "shaggy cows" (buffalo).

**Spanish Settlements**

Spanish law called for three kinds of settlements in the Americas—pueblos, missions, and presidios. **Pueblos** (PWEH • blohz), or towns, were centers of trade. **Missions** (MIH • shuhnz) were religious communities that usually included a small town, surrounding farmland, and a church. The goal of the mission was to spread religion and the Spanish way of life among the Native Americans. The Spanish often built a **presidio** (prih • SEE • dee • oh), or fort, near a mission.

A class system developed in Spain’s empire. At the top were people who were born in Spain, called *peninsulares*. The *peninsulares*owned the land, served in the Catholic Church, and ran the local government. Below them were the creoles, people born in the Americas to Spanish parents. Then came the mestizos (meh • STEE • zohs), people with Spanish and Native American parents. Still lower were the Native Americans, who were often very poor. At the bottom were enslaved Africans.

In the 1500s, Spain gave conquistadors the power to demand taxes or labor from Native Americans living in certain areas, turning the Native Americans into slaves. Grueling labor took its toll. Many died from malnutrition and disease.

A Spanish priest, Bartolomé de Las Casas, condemned the cruel treatment of the Native Americans in the Americas. He pleaded for laws to protect them.

"[T]he Spaniards still do nothing save tear the natives to shreds, murder them and inflict upon them untold misery, suffering and distress, tormenting, harrying and persecuting them mercilessly. . . . When the Spanish first journeyed there, the . . . population of the island of Hispaniola stood at some three million; today only two hundred survive."

—from *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, by Bartolomé de Las Casas

Las Casas helped **convince** the Spanish to pass the New Laws in 1542. These laws made it illegal to enslave Native Americans, and brought some of the worst abuses to an end.

Some settlers profited by exporting crops and raw materials to Spain. In the West Indies, the main exports were tobacco and sugarcane. The Spanish raised these crops on **plantations** (plan • TAY • shun)—large farms that have many workers. The Spanish used Native Americans as plantation workers. Later, traders brought millions of Africans from West Africa to the Americas to sell to plantation owners.

**Settling the Southwest**

In the early 1600s, England, France, and the Netherlands began sending colonists to North America. The Spanish were long-established in comparison to these new arrivals. They still controlled parts of the present-day United States and most of Central and South America. To avoid threats to its empire by other European powers, Spain settled present-day New Mexico. In 1609 or 1610, the Spanish founded Santa Fe. In the late 1600s, they went to what is now Arizona.

When France claimed land around the mouth of the Mississippi River, the Spanish moved into what is now Texas. Spain wanted to control the area between the French territory and Mexico. In the early 1700s, Spain built San Antonio and other military posts in Texas.

***Making Generalizations*** What generalization can you make about the seven cities of gold?