

Summary: New Settlements

New Spain

The Aztec empire covered much of present-day Mexico. In 1519, a Spanish explorer named Cortés and his soldiers planned to conquer the Aztecs. Their ruler, Montezuma, welcomed Cortés at first, but the Spaniards' greed for gold angered him and he drove them away. Cortés got help from nearby American Indian nations. Cortés was able to defeat the Aztecs because his men had horses, guns, and armor, and the Aztecs did not. Also, the Aztecs were weakened by smallpox, a European disease. Mexico became part of the colony of New Spain. Cortés took Aztec treasure back to Spain. More Spanish came to the Americas. In 1540, an explorer named Coronado went north to find gold. He did not find it, but he claimed most of the present-day southwestern United States for Spain. Hernando de Soto explored and claimed present-day Florida for Spain.

Thousands of settlers followed. The Spanish government gave them land and allowed the settlers to force American Indians to work on farms and in mines without pay. Priests came to start missions and convert American Indians to Christianity. They also tried to change American Indians' culture, language, and farming methods.

Challenges to New Spain

France, Portugal, the Netherlands, and England wanted a share of the riches that made Spain so powerful. Cartier and Champlain explored North America for France. In 1535, Cartier claimed the St. Lawrence River region. In 1608, Champlain started a fur-trading post called Quebec.

These areas became part of New France, which later became Canada. Most French settlers worked in the fur trade. They traded with American Indian nations and learned their languages and customs. French explorers claimed land as far west as the Mississippi River. An explorer named Hudson claimed the land along the Hudson River for the Netherlands. It became the colony of New Amsterdam. The English took it over in 1664 and renamed it New York.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

empire *noun*, a group of nations or territories ruled by a single government or leader

colony *noun*, a territory ruled by a distant country

convert *verb*, to convince someone to change a religion or belief

mission *noun*, a religious community where priests taught Christianity



After You Read

REVIEW Why was Cortés able to defeat the Aztecs?

Draw a box around three sentences that tell the answer.

REVIEW What country did New France become?

Underline the sentence that tells the answer.