

# Summary: Establishing Independence

## Colonialism and Independence

Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro came to South America in 1531. He conquered the Inca and claimed their land for Spain. About the same time, Portugal claimed land in what is now Brazil. Spain and Portugal became rich from their colonies in South America. Spain and Portugal brought enslaved Africans to South America to replace Native American workers.

By the early 1800s many South Americans wanted independence. Beginning in 1810, Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín led wars for independence in South America. Most of Spanish South America was independent by 1825.

Brazil did not have to fight a war to become independent. The Portuguese governor of Brazil agreed to independence. He then became emperor of Brazil.

## South America Today

South Americans hoped that their new independence would lead to fair governments. However, former officials wanted to keep their money and power. They wanted the military to have control over the new governments instead of allowing citizens to have a say. This often resulted in unlimited governments, in which one person or group held all the power. By the 1990s, most governments in South America were democratic.

In the late 1800s the United States began encouraging governments in all of the Americas to work together. This idea is called Pan-American unity. In 1948 the Organization of American States (OAS) was formed. It includes the United States and Latin American countries. The goals of the OAS are to encourage economic cooperation, social justice, equality, and democracy.

During the 1880s, many immigrants came to South America from Europe. They started new industries. This improved the economy. They also brought new customs. Today, most South Americans are mestizos or mulattos.



### Before You Read

Find and underline the vocabulary word.

**Pan-American** *adjective*, a term meaning “all of the Americas”



### After You Read

**REVIEW** How did Brazil gain its independence differently from other South American countries?

Underline the sentence that describes how in 1810 two people helped some countries gain their independence. Highlight the sentences that describe how Brazil gained its independence.

**REVIEW** Why do you think the United States wanted to establish Pan-American ties? Circle the goals held by the United States and other countries in the OAS.