

Name: _____

Age of Exploration

Francisco Pizarro



Directions: Read the following passage then answer the questions.

Enter Francisco Pizarro

In the 16th century, a Spanish explorer named Francisco Pizarro had a bold plan. He wanted to explore South America. He hoped to find new places and uncover hidden treasures. So Pizarro and a small group of warriors left Spain and sailed across the Atlantic Ocean.

Seeking the Inca Empire

They reached South America after a difficult voyage. The land was full of lush jungles, tall mountains, and winding rivers. There were exotic animals and colorful plants everywhere.

As they explored further, they met local tribes who spoke of the great Inca Empire. This empire was ruled by a powerful Emperor named Atahualpa. The Incas were known for their advanced cities and rich culture. Pizarro and his men were eager to find the Incas. They wanted to take their treasures.

The Captive Emperor

In 1532, Pizarro's men faced the Inca Empire in the town of Cajamarca. The Incas outnumbered the conquistadors by a lot. But Pizarro used better tactics and weapons to capture Atahualpa. Pizarro saw this as an opportunity. He demanded a room filled with gold and silver as a ransom for the Emperor. Atahualpa agreed, hoping to regain his freedom. So the Incas collected tons of treasure over the following months. They filled an entire room with gold and silver and gave it to Pizarro.

The Fall of an Empire

But Pizarro didn't keep his promise. After getting the ransom, he executed Atahualpa. After this the Inca Empire faced a time of trouble and confusion. Atahualpa's death marked a difficult time for them. Without their leader, the Incas had disagreements and conflicts among themselves. Pizarro and his men started conquering Inca territories. This led to the fall of the once-powerful empire.

Pizarro set up Lima as the new major city for Spain in Peru. He also built other towns. He made sure that Spain controlled the area. The Incas resisted, but the conquistadors outmatched them.

A Complex Legacy

Francisco Pizarro had a big impact on history. He opened up new possibilities for exploring and trading. But he also brought suffering to the native people. Over time the Inca Empire grew weaker while Pizarro's control strengthened.

But Pizarro had problems too. He fought with other Spanish conquerors and dealt with trouble in his own group. Ultimately, Pizarro met a violent end. He was assassinated in Lima, the city he had established. In 1541 a group of rivals attacked and killed him in his own home. Pizarro's story teaches students many lessons. Perhaps one of these is that gold isn't enough to make you happy in the end.

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Reading Questions

1. Why did Pizarro set out on his journey to South America? _____

2. Why do you think that native tribes told Pizarro about the Incas? _____

3. How were Pizarro and his men able to overcome the Inca's greater numbers? _____

4. What do Pizarro's actions after receiving the ransom suggest about him? _____

5. Why do you think this?

6. How did Atahualpa's death affect the Inca Empire? _____

7. Do you think Pizarro's decision to execute Atahualpa was morally justifiable? _____

8. Why do you believe this?

9. How did Pizarro's ambition lead to his eventual downfall? _____

10. What can readers learn from the life and death of Pizarro and how does the text show this?
