

The Debatable Land

Section One

The Spanish Occupation

Daily Warm-up – Which European country first permanently settled the colony of Florida?

Terms to Know

<i>Natural resources</i>	<i>Christopher Columbus</i>	<i>Dominican Republic</i>
<i>Caribbean Sea</i>	<i>Hispaniola</i>	<i>Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon</i>
<i>Sapelo Island</i>	<i>Conquistadors</i>	<i>Hernando De Soto</i>
<i>Francisco Vasquez de Coronado</i>	<i>Hernan Cortez</i>	<i>Tenochtitlan</i>
<i>Aztecs</i>	<i>La Florida</i>	<i>Ponce de Leon</i>
<i>Pedro Menendez de Aviles</i>		

Several hundred years ago many great countries of Europe began competing with one another for **natural resources** found throughout the world. These resources included things like animal hides, timber, crops, plant chemicals, foods, and precious metals. These items were often hard to find in Europe, so Europeans had to look elsewhere for them. Consequently, European explorers began to venture out far in the ocean. These explorers were in search of new lands with many natural resources like the ones above.

One of the first great explorers to settle people in the New World was **Christopher Columbus**. Though Columbus was Italian, he sailed for Spain to the New World in 1492. His primary **endeavor** was to find gold and silver

Reading Skills Break

Based upon the context of its use in the sentence below, which best defines the meaning of the word endeavor?

- A.) Plan
- B.) Duty
- C.) Goal
- D.) Hobby

for the Spanish king and queen. In a place called Santo Domingo, located in the present-day **Dominican Republic**, he was the first European to formally establish a claim to lands in the Americas. As such, Spanish authorities believed they held rights to the New World and began attempting to colonize many parts of it. Spain was the first nation to take over the **Caribbean Sea** with Hispaniola becoming the Spanish capital over all her New World possessions. Hispaniola was located in modern –day Dominican Republic.

After Columbus’ voyages, many Spanish explorers followed in order to discover and settle new territories. One such explorer was **Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon**. Ayllon left Hispaniola in 1526 en route for the North American mainland. He and 600 colonists ended up on an island close to Sapelo Island off the coast of modern Georgia. They called their settlement San Miquel de Guadalupe. Before long, Ayllon died, and the other colonists began to



Fig. 1. The map above shows the route that Hernando De Soto traveled throughout the Southeast. Reprinted with permission from Fort Desoto National Monument.

suffer as well. Only 150 survived; they escaped later back to Hispaniola. Such hardships proved that populating a new world was highly dangerous.

The Debatable Land (Unit Two)

Many Spanish explorers were not interested in permanent settlements. Instead, they wanted to establish wealth by finding gold and silver. These types of explorers were called **conquistadors**. In their selfish quest for gold, these conquistadors often harmed entire Native American civilizations. **Hernando De Soto** for example, was a Spanish explorer who, from 1539 to 1541, traveled throughout Southeastern North America, including modern day Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas. On the way, he ravaged Indian communities in his search for gold and new territories to colonize.

Francisco Vasquez de Coronado left Mexico in the early 1540s and toured southwestern North America in pursuit of the legendary *Seven Cities of Cibola*. This city, he believed, was filled with vast **treasures**. Along the way he showed little respect toward the natives and often killed them. Though they killed many natives in search of gold, neither De Soto nor Coronado ever discovered any of it.

Earlier in 1520, the conquistador **Hernan Cortez** invaded the ancient city of **Tenochtitlan**, the ancient Aztec Indian capital found in central Mexico. The following year he defeated the **Aztecs**, killing their respected leader Montezuma. The Aztecs were an advanced civilization of Native Americans found in Mexico. They had established a modern city there and had made remarkable advances in engineering, art, mathematics, and astronomy. In fact, the Aztecs used a calendar that was far more accurate than the one used by Europeans. They might have successfully defended themselves against Cortez were it not for an outbreak of smallpox among the Aztec people.

The most successful colony established by Spain in America was **La Florida**, so named by **Ponce de Leon** who explored the area in 1513 in search of his famous Fountain of Youth. Ponce de Leon claimed the land for Spain but never established a colony due to Indian hostility.

A permanent colony in Florida came in 1565 with the establishment of St. Augustine by **Pedro Menendez de Aviles**. Menendez set up this colony to settle soldiers and their families. The soldiers were to help protect Spanish treasure ships coming up out of South America. The fleets were filled with millions of dollars in precious metals and jewels. In 1565, Menendez, along with a large Spanish force, removed the French entirely from the southeastern coast. Three years earlier, the French had settled Fort Caroline on the St. Johns River near modern day Jacksonville, Florida.

Over the next several decades, St. Augustine grew into a major city and became the center of operations for the Spanish in North America. The Spanish **erected** missions and forts throughout modern Georgia and North Florida. Priests and missionaries lived in these missions. Their goal was to Christianize the Native Americans. Additionally, the Spanish hoped to teach the Indians how to grow crops the way Europeans did. This, they believed, would help produce enough food for the colonists settled in the Caribbean Islands.

These are just a few of the events that happened as the explorers traveled through the new world. All of these events contributed to the **legacy** of Spanish colonization. First, Spanish accounts of the New World were quite glamorous and helped to popularize the Americas among Europeans.

Secondly, the Spanish saw the Native Americans as barriers to progress and, as such, viewed them as sub-human and unworthy of owning a land filled with enormous wealth. This would greatly affect how other

Language Arts Break

As used in the sentence to the left, what part of speech is the word treasures?

- A.) Adverb
- B.) Adjective
- C.) Noun
- D.) Preposition

Reading Skills Break

Based upon the context of its use in the sentence below, which best defines the meaning of the word erected?

- A.) Planned
- B.) Manned
- C.) Defended
- D.) Built

Reading Skills Break

Based upon the context of its use in the sentence to the left, which of the following best describes the meaning of the word legacy.

- A.) Future
- B.) Benefit
- C.) Inheritance
- D.) Profit

The Debatable Land (Unit Two)

Europeans treated the Natives. Thirdly, the Spanish kept good records and drawings. These documents opened up all the mysteries and wonders of the New World to competing nations. It was not long before others were attempting to out-compete Spain for control of the New World.

Self Check:

- 1) Why was Spain so interested in colonizing the New World?
- 2) What were the Spanish conquistadors most interested in gaining from the New World? How did this impact the Native Americans?
- 3) How did Spain's early exploration of the New World go on to serve other European countries?

Guided Reading Quiz:

- 1) Name the two major natural resources that Christopher Columbus was primarily interested in getting from the New World.
- 2) Which Spanish explorer toured the Southeast in the 1540s?
- 3) Which Spanish explorer toured Southwestern North America?
- 4) True or False The Native Americans benefited greatly from Spanish Colonization.
- 5) Which advanced civilization did Hernan Cortez defeat?
- 6) What did the Spanish hope to accomplish by building missions among the Native Americans in the Southeast?
- 7) Name one way the Spanish helped to spark great interest in New World colonization.
- 8) True or False The Spanish had little impact on how other Europeans came to view the Native Americans.
- 9) What was Ponce De Leon searching for when he explored La Florida?
- 10) Where did Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon settle his colony called San Miquel de Guadalupe?