

# Conquest of latin america



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

1) Compare and Contrast the conquest of the Inca and Aztec Empire. The Spanish due to their inferior weapons, the bold war tactics of the Spanish and the eventual capture of both empires' emperors defeated the Incas and Aztecs. However, in both societies the single greatest factor that led to their ultimate demise was the smallpox epidemic. This epidemic swept through Latin America and took a hold of both of these empires and affected them with catastrophic results.

At roughly the same time as the influx of smallpox in Mexico, Hernan Cortes and his Spanish Conquistadors had commenced in hostilities with the native Aztec Empire. Cortes and his men, despite an alliance with native warriors hostile to the Aztec Empire, were hugely outnumbered. However, Cortes had another ally, a biological weapon that even he was unaware of, smallpox. Smallpox was a European disease that the natives in Latin America had never been exposed to.

It took a hold of several lives in Aztec population and weaken it's army making it much easier for Cortes and his men to solidly put a grip on their conquest of the Aztecs. It has been argued that without the smallpox epidemic in Mexico, Cortes may not have succeeded against the Aztecs. Smallpox claimed an estimated one third of the Aztec population. The Aztec Emperor Cuitlahuac died from smallpox, further creating the Aztecs to fall into a shambles of a society they once were. The Aztec Empire collapsed and Cortes took control of Mexico.

Without this advantage the Aztec Empire may have lived on for many more centuries, Cortes was incredibly lucky to have caught the empire at a rather

bad time. Smallpox spread south at an incredible rate. Even before Francisco Pizarro arrived in Peru to confront the Inca Empire, smallpox was decimating the native population in South America. Pizarro first arrived in the Inca realm in the mid 1520s. By the time he returned in 1532, intent on conquering the Inca Empire, the smallpox epidemic had contributed to the outbreak of civil war in the Empire and caused the death of the Inca Emperor Huayna Capac. His successor, Atahualpa, found himself leader of an Empire weakened and terrorized by a strange and deadly disease. Pizarro, like Cortes, made the most of the situation, and took over the Inca Empire as well. Both of these men were incredibly lucky to have gotten to Latin America at such a favorable time for conquest. The odd of this biological weapon affecting both of these empires at the same time is unbelievable. Even though this disease took a hold of both domains, and had the same catastrophic effects, the Incas had a bit more on their plate than the Aztecs did.

In 1531, Pizarro landed at Tumbez once again and proceeded to march into Peru. Along their march the Spaniards encountered many villages and were generally made welcome in them. While on the march, Pizarro took note the lack of adult males in residence in the villages. This was due to the fact that Atahualpa had called them for his army. Through several inquiries, Pizarro learned of the civil war and the present whereabouts of Atahualpa, the Inca in power. He was apparently in Cajamarca and so Pizarro proceeded to march in that direction to find him.

On the long march from Tumbez to Cajamarca, Pizarro and his men began recruiting soldiers that were loyal to Huascar and also some from the nations

that the Incas had conquered and that held an animosity toward the empire. This would end up working towards Pizarro's advantage, not only were the Incas weak with disease, but they were in the midst of a civil war over who would take over rule. However, when Pizarro finally reached Cajamarca, the Spaniards found the town deserted.

Eventually though, Pizarro found Atahualpa and told him that if he did not make his Inca people convert to Christianity they were to be considered an enemy to the Spanish throne. Atahualpa refused therefore Pizarro captured him, and waged war against the Incas. Eventually Pizarro used many sneaky tactics against Atahualpa and one way or another he was executed. Without a ruler the Incas were weakened even further. On the other hand the Aztecs, never had this issue, though they had many of their own, to any great civilization the loss of a ruler is a loss of a nation's connected ties to band together.