

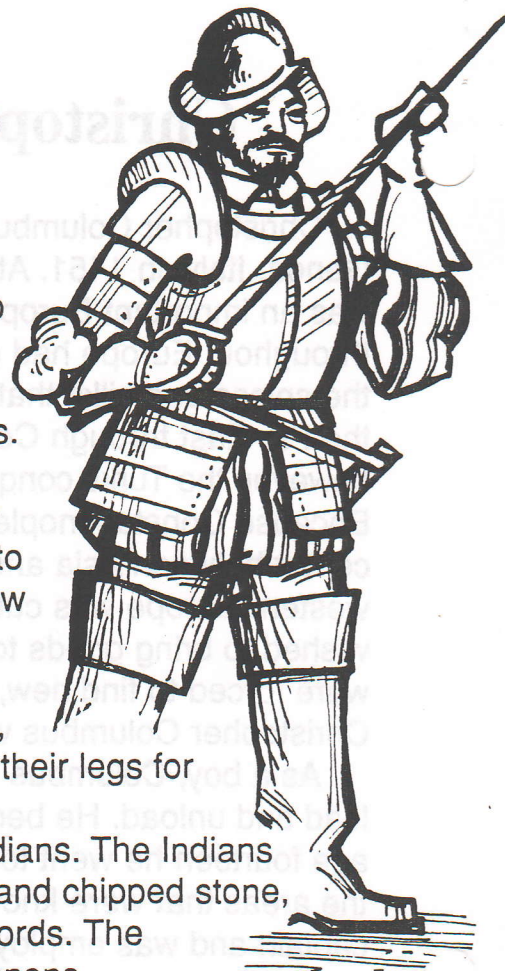
The Conquistadors

Spaniards who helped seize goods and territory in the New World were called conquistadors, which means *those who conquer*. The desire for gold and land led these men to plunder both the Inca and the Aztec civilizations in South America. The conquistadors conquered areas that later became Florida, Texas, and the southwestern United States.

What made these "conquerors" so successful? South America was hot and the people who lived there dressed in light clothing. The conquistadors, on the other hand, came to the land heavily protected by the finest armor the world knew at that time. Almost every inch of them was covered with some form of protection. Jointed metal covered their legs, and they wore steel helmets and breastplates or chain mail, a lighter type of armor. Even their boots were worn high on their legs for protection.

The conquistadors also had better weapons than the Indians. The Indians fought with arrows, hatchets, and spears made from wood and chipped stone, while the Spaniards used steel-tipped lances and sharp swords. The conquistadors also drew crossbows and fired guns and cannons.

The Incas and the Aztecs fought hard to save their cultures, but were unsuccessful. The gold and precious stones of the area proved too great a lure for the Spanish conquistadors.



1. Why was *conquistador* a good name for the men who seized parts of North and South America? _____

2. What advantages did the conquistadors have in battles against the South American Indians? _____

3. How might the actions of the conquistadors long ago have affected the present culture of South America? _____

