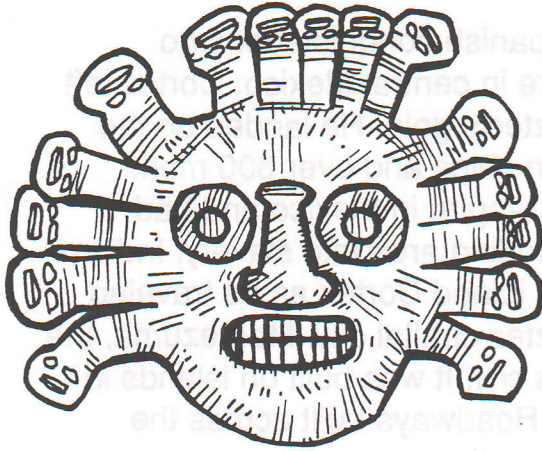


Francisco Pizarro (1470?-1541)



Francisco Pizarro was a cruel and devious conqueror. He had been a member of Balboa's party when the explorer found the Pacific Ocean. Later, Pizarro settled in Panama.

Pizarro was from a poor family, and stories of riches in South America were a constant lure to him. He vowed to explore the Indian lands and find wealth like the Aztec riches Cortez had found.

Pizarro convinced Charles I of Spain to fund his exploration of the New World. In 1531, Pizarro set sail for South America with three ships and almost 200 men. The ships landed on the western coast of South America, and Pizarro and his crew journeyed inland. Pizarro discovered that, like the Aztecs, the Incas of Peru had built a great civilization. They had conquered surrounding tribes and now ruled a great area. As Pizarro marched his men through the Indian territory, he heard stories of the vast wealth of the capital city of Cuzco.

Atahualpa was the ruler of the Incas. When Pizarro met Atahualpa in Cuzco, Pizarro had one of his men, a friar, read a document demanding that the ruler convert to Christianity. When the friar handed Atahualpa a Bible, the chief threw it to the ground.

The Spaniards were shocked at this action. Pizarro motioned for an attack to begin. Thousands of Incas were killed, and Atahualpa was taken prisoner. The Spanish looted the vast Incan storehouses of gold and silver. King Charles I received great treasures from the Incan empire.

By 1531, the Spaniards had completely destroyed the Inca civilization. Pizarro was made governor of the area. He held the office until 1541, when he was murdered by the son of a man he had ordered imprisoned and killed.

1. Write four adjectives that describe Francisco Pizarro. _____

2. What other ways could Pizarro have dealt with the Incas?
