

Name _____

Global 1

The Economienda System

The class system was very important in Latin America. It determined a persons place in society. Many countries lived by this system for many hundreds of years. The Spanish colonies in Latin America were no different.

In the Latin American colonies, individuals that were born in Spain and then moved to the Americas were in the highest class (Peninsulares). Peninsulares only made up two percent of the population, but had most of the power and ran the government. They were a very powerful group.

Creoles were next in line. They were individuals that were born in the Americas, but had parents or ancestors that had been born in Spain. Even though Creoles were not mixed with another race they had less power than the Spaniards and could not hold government office. They were eighteen percent of the population.

Thirty percent of the population was made up of Mestizos. They were part Indian and part Spanish; they worked as craftspeople, shop owners, managers in mines or on plantations and sometime held minor positions in the church. The Mestizos lived better than the Indians or slaves, but had little opportunity for improving their lives.

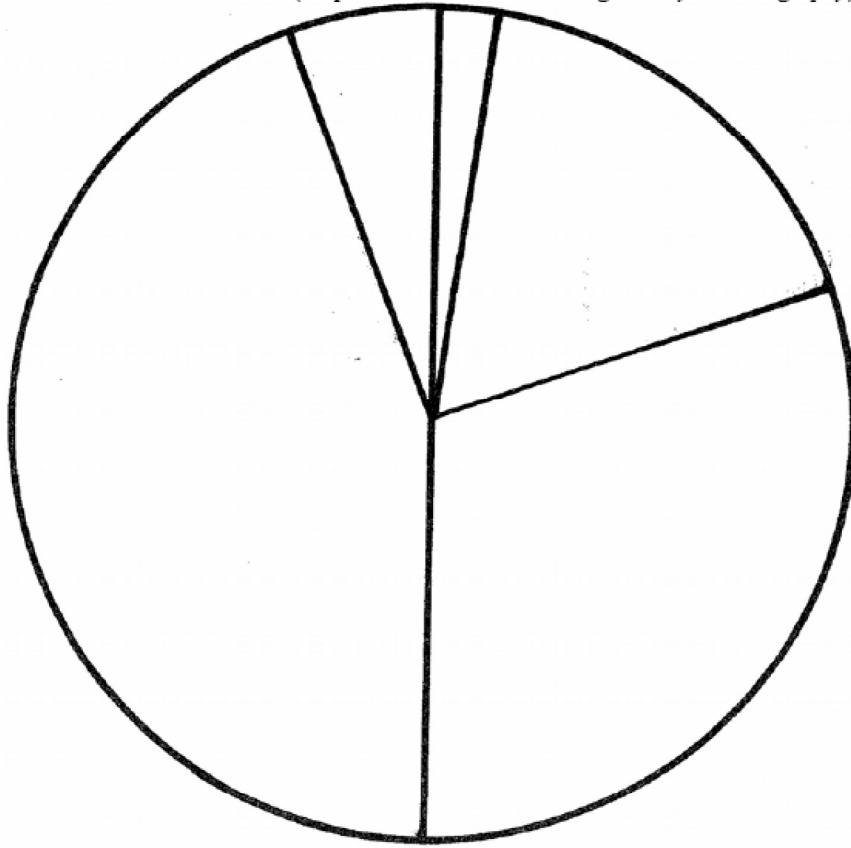
Although Indians made up the largest part of the population, forty-five percent, most were poor and had few rights. They worked in mines and on plantations, but many still lived in the mountains, forests and jungles, having little to do with the colonies.

Finally the most oppressed, least powerful group of all were the slaves. These were Africans that had been brought, by the Spanish, to the Americas starting in the early 1500s. They made up the remaining five percent of the population. The lower three classes made up the majority of the population, but they were the poorest, least educated and oppressed. Throughout all of the colonies in Latin America the Europeans were at the top of the ladder and the Indians and Africans were at the bottom.

- 1. Using information from the reading fill in the Pie graph on the other side.**
- 2. Who benefited the most from this system?**
- 3. Why might the other groups feel resentment towards the group above?**

Graph of Latin American Class System, 1700s

(adapted from *Pearson Learning History and Geography*)



<input type="checkbox"/>	Spaniards
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creoles
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mestizos
<input type="checkbox"/>	Indians
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slaves