



Francisco Pizarro (A.D. 1478?–1541)

There lies Peru with its riches here, Panama and its poverty. Choose, each man, what best becomes a brave Castilian. For my part, I go to the South.—Francisco Pizarro, tracing a line on the sand and looking South

Raised in Spain by poor relatives of his mother, Francisco Pizarro never learned to read and write. Service in the Spanish infantry, however, taught him about fighting—and conquering. The Spanish infantry was noted for three things: courage, cruelty, and greed.

Pizarro set out for the West Indies in 1502, when he was in his early twenties. He served as Vasco Núñez de Balboa's chief lieutenant and was at Balboa's side when he marched across the Isthmus of Panama to the Pacific Ocean in 1513. Years later Pizarro heard stories of an incredibly rich empire to the south. He wanted to find it and take its wealth for himself.

Pizarro and his business manager, Diego de Almagro, organized an expedition in 1524. After battling bad weather and attacks by native populations, the voyagers reached their goal in what is now Peru. Pizarro and his followers were the first Europeans to set foot in Peru. The first people they encountered wore shiny yellow ornaments—gold! Peru had more silver and gold than any other part of the Americas.

Pizarro returned to Spain and reported his findings to King Charles I, who appointed him governor of Peru. Returning from Spain, Pizarro



founded the city of San Miguel de Tangarara (now Piura) in northern Peru. Although the Inca civil war was over, the land was still in turmoil. Had Pizarro tried to invade Peru earlier, he would have been met by a united empire; but now the Incas were split, giving him the opportunity to play one side against the other. In a surprise attack, Pizarro's men captured the Inca ruler, Atahualpa, slaughtering between 3,000 and 4,000 Incas in the process. Pizarro held Atahualpa captive, promising

to spare his life if a ransom were paid. After receiving the ransom, Pizarro and his men executed Atahualpa anyway.

Eight years after reaching Peru, Pizarro founded the city of Lima as Peru's capital, setting himself up as the governor. While he was governor, many Spaniards settled in Peru. They mined great amounts of silver and gold and built many cities. With Peru as its base, Spain conquered most of the rest of South America. In the late 1530s, war broke out over who was to rule the area around Cusco—Pizarro or his old ally Almagro. Pizarro's forces won the conflict and executed Almagro. In 1541 followers of Almagro's son killed Pizarro. It was a death perhaps in keeping with his violent life.

Reviewing the Profile

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. How was Pizarro associated with Balboa?
2. How did Pizarro conquer the Incas?

Critical Thinking

3. **Making Inferences** What do you think was the Inca people's opinion of Pizarro?