



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

# Monday 27 June 2022 – Afternoon

## GCSE (9–1) History B (Schools History Project)

**J411/82** Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest, 1519–1535

Time allowed: 1 hour



### You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer Questions 1 and 2, and **either** Question 3 **or** Question 4.

### INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **40**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [ ].
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (\*).
- This document has **4** pages.

### ADVICE

- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

**Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest, 1519–1535**

Answer Questions 1 and 2.

- 1 What can **Source A** tell us about the first meetings between the Aztecs and the Spanish? Use the source and your own knowledge to support your answer.

[7]

**Source A**

**From an account by a Spanish priest. The priest put together the account from reports by Indians collected at least twenty years after the events described.**

When Cortes arrived, Moctezuma believed it was the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl returning. He sent messengers to meet him and give him items belonging to the god such as a serpent mask and a feather head fan.

When Moctezuma's messengers returned and reported, he was afraid. It made him faint when he heard how the Spaniards' guns went off, sounding like thunder. Their war clothing was all iron and they put iron on their heads.

When Moctezuma heard this he was greatly afraid and sent more messengers including captives in case the Spaniards wanted to drink their blood. But when the messengers sprinkled blood on the food it made the Spaniards feel ill and disgusted them.

The messengers returned and said how strong the Spaniards were, saying, 'we are not their match.' Moctezuma told them, under the threat of death, to take care of everything the Spaniards might need.

- 2 How useful are **Interpretation B** and **Sources C and D** for a historian studying the conflict between the Spanish and the Aztecs between 1519 and 1521?  
In your answer, refer to the interpretation and the two sources as well as your own knowledge.

[15]

### Interpretation B

**From 'Spain in the New World' by Bernard Waites, 2008.**

How were the Spaniards able to recover from their retreat from Tenochtitlan? Three factors stand out, though the significance of each one is much debated.

First, the fragmentation of the Aztec Empire brought the Spaniards new allies. Messengers from other cities arrived and offered to support Cortes against the Aztecs.

Second, smallpox was sweeping through Tenochtitlan for sixty days. The dead were too numerous to bury and were tossed into the lake.

Third, the Spaniards' technical superiority enabled them to build a fleet of flat-bottomed boats, each carrying thirty fighting men, with which to blockade Tenochtitlan.

### Source C

**From 'The True History of the Conquest of New Spain' written by Bernal Diaz, one of Cortes' soldiers. He finished the book in 1568 but later added more to it as a response to the publication of a different and more critical account of Cortes' actions.**

In the siege of Tenochtitlan we filled in water channels and gaps in the day time so we could advance. But the Aztecs reopened them each night. The fighting and filling in was very hard labour. Cortes asked us whether we approved of a rapid advance into the city as far as the great market. If we could capture it, we could establish our camps there, and from that base we should be able to fight in the streets of the city without all the labour of nightly retreats and filling in and guarding the bridges.

### Source D

**From 'The General History of the Things of New Spain' written by Bernardino de Sahagun, a Franciscan friar, between 1558 and 1585. This extract is based on accounts from Indians.**

Before the Spaniards arrived, an epidemic broke out among the Aztecs. Large bumps spread on people, some were completely covered. A great many died of it. The disease lasted for sixty days and the Aztec warriors were greatly weakened by it. After the Spaniards arrived there was famine, many Aztecs died of hunger. There was no good and pure water.

Later, as the Aztecs were backed up against the city walls, a blood-coloured fire seemed to come from the sky. It was very dark when the fire appeared. It was like a whirlwind. It went spinning around and around, and as it went it then seemed to explode into blazing coals. It circled the walls. No one uttered a sound.

**TURN OVER FOR QUESTIONS 3 AND 4**

Answer **either** Question 3 **or** Question 4.

**3\*** How far do you agree that it was the rule of elites that enabled the Aztecs to control their empire? **[18]**

**4\*** 'After the conquest of the Aztecs, the most important impact of the Spaniards in Mexico was their impact on the land.'  
How far do you agree? **[18]**

**END OF QUESTION PAPER**

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