

Mexico

Mexico is part of a region we call Middle and South America. The region includes Central America and the Caribbean islands as well as South America. Mexico and the region's other countries share many cultural and historical features.

¡Hola! (Hello!) My name is Ellie. I live in a village, San Francisco Acatepec, near Puebla. Our house is made of adobe, or sun-dried clay bricks, and has a big yard. The ceilings are wood, with beams, and there are many arches.

We eat on a different schedule than you do in the United States. We eat a big breakfast, then at school we just have a snack. At lunch almost everybody goes to a vendor for *tortas*, which are like sandwiches in rolls. There are also little stands outside the school where we can buy fruit and raw vegetables and homemade potato chips. All come with a lot of very hot chile. We come home from school, and at about 3:00 P.M. we have a big *comida*—that is our dinner. Some of the things we really like are lentil soup, *chiles rellenos*, and fish. Tortillas go with everything. We almost never eat meat because my brother is a vegetarian. At about 8:00 P.M. we have *cena*, which is like a snack before bed.

If you came to visit me, I would show you the *Zócalo*—our town plaza, or central square. I could also take you to the pyramid at Cholula. It was the biggest thing ever built in the Americas before the Spaniards got here! There is a Spanish church at the very top. I'd also take you to see a lot of churches decorated with gold. If we had time, we'd go to the beach in Veracruz, a really pretty town about three hours away.

Tarahumara woman selling baskets, Sonora State

Portrait of Maya ruler Pacal from Palenque, Chiapas State

Section
1

Natural Environments

HOLT
Geography's Impact Video Series

Watch the video to understand the impact of emigration on Mexico.

READ TO DISCOVER

1. What are the main landforms of Mexico?
2. What climates, biomes, and natural resources does Mexico have?

DEFINE

isthmus
sinkholes

LOCATE

Mexican Plateau	Mexico City
Sierra Madre Oriental	Orizaba
Sierra Madre Occidental	Isthmus of Tehuantepec
Sierra Madre del Sur	Yucatán Peninsula
Valley of Mexico	Baja California

Reading Strategy

VISUALIZING INFORMATION

Before you read, preview the Physical-Political Map of Mexico. Make notes about features you see on the map that you think will help you understand what you are about to read. For example, what physical features do you see on the map? As you read, explain how the features on the map relate to the materials in the section.



Mexico: Physical-Political





Popocatepetl, an active volcano, rises behind an ancient pyramid at Cholula and the church at its summit. More than 20 million people live within 50 miles of the volcano.

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KEYWORD: SW3 CH10

FOR: Web sites about Mexico



Every fall, thousands of monarch butterflies migrate to the mountains of Mexico. Some of the butterflies travel more than 1,800 miles (2,900 km) to their winter home.

Landforms

Mexico is a large country, almost three times the size of Texas. Most of the country is made up of a rugged central plateau, called the Mexican Plateau. In places this plateau is as high as 9,000 feet (2,700 m). Three great mountain ranges border the Mexican Plateau. The Sierra Madre Oriental is in the east and the Sierra Madre Occidental in the west. Along the southern Pacific coast is the Sierra Madre del Sur. Coastal plains separate the mountain ranges from the sea. The eastern coastal plain is generally wider than the plain along the Pacific coast.

At the southern end of the Mexican Plateau lies the Valley of Mexico, where Mexico City is located. The floor of this broad valley is about 7,500 feet (2,280 m) above sea level. Until they get used to the altitude, visitors to the city may feel a shortness of breath and lack of energy due to the thin air. The mountains southeast of Mexico City include great volcanoes. The highest, Orizaba, soars to 18,700 feet (5,700 m). Because the area is tectonically active, earthquakes are also common.

In southern Mexico, the landforms become more complex, with many small mountain ranges, narrow valleys, and volcanoes. The rugged terrain makes overland travel difficult. Many villages are connected only by single-lane roads. Similar landscapes continue southward into Central America.

Mexico narrows in the south to form an **isthmus**. An isthmus is a narrow strip of land connecting two larger land areas. The Pacific Ocean and Gulf of Mexico lie just about 150 miles (240 km) apart at Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec (tay-WAHN-tah-pek). The Yucatán (yoo-kah-TAHN) Peninsula, Mexico's flattest region, is located in southeastern Mexico. Limestone lies beneath the Yucatán's surface. Water tends to drain through this limestone, rather than flow across the surface. As a result, the Yucatán has few rivers even though the area has a humid climate. Erosion has created many caves and **sinkholes** in this area. A sinkhole is a steep-sided depression that forms when the roof of a cave collapses.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Physical Systems* What landform makes up most of central Mexico?

Climate, Biomes, and Natural Resources

Mexico's climate varies by region. Vegetation ranges from desert plants in the north to tropical forests in the south. The country also has a variety of natural resources. Mexico stretches through both the subtropical and tropical latitudes. Partly as a result of this location, the country has a range of tropical and dry climates. Three factors help explain Mexico's climates. First is a regional high-pressure system known as the Pacific subtropical high pressure cell. The dry weather this system creates dominates northwestern Mexico. The result is arid and semiarid climates and scrub vegetation in the north and west, particularly Baja California. The influence of this high-pressure system extends east and south as well. It limits the amount of rainfall over about two thirds of

Mexico's land area. Therefore, dry grasslands and brush cover much of northern Mexico's plains.

The northeast tradewinds are the second factor affecting Mexico's climates. These winds bring humid air from the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. As a result, rains sweep into Mexico mostly from the east and southeast, particularly during the summer. In fact, the forested plains of southeastern Mexico have a tropical humid climate. The easterly winds also steer hurricanes toward Mexico's east coast. Hurricanes also strike the Pacific coast but are less common there.

Finally, climates vary dramatically with elevation. Mexico's highest levels of rainfall occur where the humid trade winds rise against the mountains of the southeast. This also leads to dry rain-shadow climates on the western sides of the mountains. Many people live in the mild environments of the mountain valleys. The valleys along Mexico's southern coast also have pleasant subtropical climates. The high elevations on the Mexican Plateau can have cool highland climates. During the winter, cold polar air sometimes flows southward across the Mexican Plateau. Snow can fall in the Sierra Madre Occidental. This cold air brings freezing temperatures as far south as Mexico City.

Mexico does not have many major rivers. Its largest rivers drain areas of central Mexico. These rivers provide the country with hydroelectric power and water for irrigation.

Mexico has many mineral resources. Centuries ago silver was the country's most valuable mineral product. Mexico remains the world's leading silver producer. The country also produces many other metals, including gold, iron, lead, and mercury.

Today petroleum is Mexico's most valuable natural resource. Mexico's great oil and natural gas fields lie along the Gulf of Mexico. Most of Mexico's oil is exported to the United States.

READING CHECK: *Physical Systems* What three factors influence Mexico's climates? What is Mexico's most important natural resource?



INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Cuatro Ciénegas ("Four Marshes") is a unique area of sparkling water in the Chihuahua Desert of northern Mexico. These spring-fed pools shelter many species found nowhere else. Many other desert-dwelling species depend on the water. The horned lizard (inset photo) lives in the region's dry areas. Which mountain range do you think appears in the photo?

Section 1

Review

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Define
isthmus
sinkhole

Working with Sketch Maps

On a map of Mexico that you draw or that your teacher provides, label the Mexican Plateau, Sierra Madre Oriental, Sierra Madre Occidental, Sierra Madre del Sur, Valley of Mexico, Mexico City, Orizaba, Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Yucatán Peninsula, and Baja California. Where are most of Mexico's oil deposits located?

Reading for the Main Idea

- Physical Systems** What three mountain ranges border the Mexican Plateau?
- Physical Systems** Why does the Yucatán Peninsula have sinkholes?

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Information** Why are the western sides of Mexico's mountains drier than the eastern sides?
- Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** What geographical factors do you think might benefit industrial growth in Mexico?

Organizing What You Know

- Copy the following graphic organizer. Use it to describe Mexico's physical geography.

Landforms	Climate	Resources

Section 2

History and Culture

READ TO DISCOVER

1. What were the cultures of Mexico like before the Spanish arrived?
2. How did Spanish control change Mexico?
3. What has Mexico's history been like since independence?

Reading Strategy

DEVELOPING VOCABULARY Before you read, write the key terms on a sheet of paper. Leave space between each one. As you read the section, write down the meaning of each term. Then describe how the term relates to the history and culture of Mexico.

DEFINE

conquistadores mestizos
haciendas dictator
plaza

LOCATE

Acapulco
Cancún
Mazatlán

Early Mexico

Mexico's early peoples belonged to many cultures, each with its own language. Some people were hunter-gatherers. Others were farmers. Their main crops included beans, corn, peppers, and squash. Farmers grew these crops together in the same plots. The bean plants climbed the corn stalks, while the squash and peppers grew between the corn plants. This combination maintained soil fertility and also provided a complete diet. This style of cultivation, called milpa, is still widespread today. In addition, corn tortillas and beans flavored with peppers are still bases of Mexican cooking.

Some of the American Indian peoples of what are now Mexico and Central America created highly complex and accomplished civilizations. These peoples included the Maya, Olmec, Toltec, and Zapotec. Many had large city centers with splendid avenues, plazas, and pyramids. The last of these civilizations was the Aztec. Skilled in warfare, the Aztec built an empire in what is now

INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Palenque (puh-LENG-kay), in Chiapas State, was one of the main Maya cities. The building shown is Palenque's palace complex, which includes a four-story observatory. By watching the stars and planets, the Maya were able to devise a complex and accurate calendar. Examine the unit and chapter maps. How might the natural environment of the Chiapas area have affected Maya culture?



central and southern Mexico. Their splendid capital city, Tenochtitlán (tay-nawch-tee-TLAHN), occupied an island in a lake in the Valley of Mexico. When the Spaniards arrived, this city was one of the largest in the world. (See Cities & Settlements: Mexico City.)

✓ **READING CHECK:** **Places and Regions** What were the main crops that farmers grew in ancient Mexico?

The Colonial Period

In 1519 a band of Spanish adventurers landed on the eastern coast of Mexico. As they traveled inland, these **conquistadores** (kahn-kees-tuh-DAWR-ez), or conquerors, formed crucial military alliances with peoples who resented the Aztec. The Spaniards also had muskets and horses, which were unknown in the Americas at that time.

New diseases, such as smallpox, arrived along with the Spaniards. The American Indians had no resistance to these European diseases, which spread rapidly through their population, killing many. The high death rate weakened the Aztec Empire. This weakness, along with the Spaniards' other advantages, helped the small Spanish band capture the Aztec capital. With the city's fall, the Aztec Empire ended. The conquerors called their colony Nueva España, or New Spain. Colonists would build Mexico City on the ruins of Tenochtitlán.

Desire for gold and silver had been a major motive for Spain to colonize the Americas. The Spaniards expanded the existing mining operations. Gradually, agriculture became an important part of the colonial economy as well. The Indians had mostly owned and worked the land in groups. Lands they worked in common were called *ejidos* (e-HEE-thos). The Spanish organized these lands into **haciendas** (hah-see-EN-duhs). Haciendas were large estates usually owned by wealthy families but worked by many peasants, usually Indians.

Roman Catholic missionaries tried to convert the American Indians to Christianity. They established frontier outposts called missions. Towns often grew up around these churches. The open space, or **plaza**, in front of the church might become a center for the community market. The plaza is a common feature in towns throughout middle and South America, Spain, and other parts of southern Europe.



Before the Spanish conquest, the people of Mexico enriched their diets with protein-rich grasshoppers, larvae, locusts, and worms. Now these foods are popular in some Mexican restaurants.

INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

This painting from 1579 shows the initial meeting in 1519 of Hernán Cortés, a Spanish conquistador, and Moctezuma, the Aztec ruler. Cortés took Moctezuma prisoner and conquered the Aztec lands. How can you tell from the picture that the relationship between the two peoples had changed over time?



Oaxacan families decorate graves on the Day of the Dead. On this holiday, which combines Christian and pre-Christian traditions, Mexicans remember their dead and celebrate the continuity of life.

Connecting to

ANTHROPOLOGY

Rites of Passage

Societies hold ceremonies, such as weddings, to mark the times when its members move from one stage of life to another. Anthropologists call these ceremonies rites of passage. In Mexico, the *quinceañera* (keen-se-ahn-YE-rah) celebrates a girl's fifteenth birthday. It also marks the end of her childhood. A *quinceañera* typically begins with a Catholic Mass and ends with a big fiesta. The event can be similar to a wedding in terms of preparation, special clothes, food, and costs. *Quinceañeras* may date back to an old Aztec ceremony that stressed to young women the importance of following society's rules.

Making Generalizations and Predictions How might *quinceañeras* contribute to a society's unity?



Today most Mexicans are Roman Catholic. However, over time Christianity in Mexico has changed. In many cases pre-Christian beliefs and holidays combined with Christian beliefs. These distinctively Mexican traditions continue into the present.

Throughout Mexico's history the Spanish and American Indian cultures mixed. Early in the colonial period, most colonists were men, and marriage with American Indian women was common. Today the majority of Mexicans are **mestizos**, people of mixed European and Indian ancestry.

✓ **READING CHECK: Human Systems** What factors helped the Spanish conquer the Aztec?

Mexico since Independence

The recent history of Mexico has been marked by rapid, sometimes violent, political change. Economic and cultural change there has been just as dramatic.

Independence and Revolution In 1810, Mexicans began to revolt against Spanish rule. Fighting continued until 1821, when Mexico finally won its independence. Although Spanish administrators returned to Spain, little really changed in Mexico. A few powerful families still controlled the economy and the government. In 1848 Mexico lost its northern territory from Texas to California following a war with the United States. Still, American and European investments during the late 1800s did lead to economic growth for Mexico. New mines were developed, and railroads were built. Modern industries grew in cities. Plantation agriculture expanded along the eastern coast. These plantations were large estates farmed by workers who lived on the property.

However, while a few Mexicans became rich, most remained poor. This economic inequality led to the Mexican Revolution, which lasted from 1910 to 1920. Following the revolution, the new government took the outward form of a democracy. The reality was much different. The president, who ruled much like a **dictator**, held almost all of the power. A dictator is a leader who rules with almost absolute authority. Mexico's government became much more involved in the national economy. It even began to directly control some industries. As a result, many foreign-owned businesses, particularly oil companies, were forced out of Mexico.

One result of the revolution was land reform. Large haciendas were broken up and given to peasant villages according to the old *ejido* system. Over time about half of Mexico's farmland became *ejidos*. While politically popular, the new land system was not very successful. The land given out was often poor and the plots small in size. Few farmers had the money to buy fertilizers and modern machinery. Many discouraged farmers moved to the cities. In 1992, *ejido* farmers won the right to sell their land, and many did. Some farmland has been combined into larger commercial farms. Some land near towns has become suburban housing tracts.

✓ **READING CHECK: Human Systems** What kind of government resulted from the Mexican Revolution?

Modern Mexico Since about 1990, Mexico has again opened its economy to foreign businesses. Mexico's factories turn out nearly all the products a large country needs. The country, once largely rural, is increasingly urban. In fact, three quarters of Mexicans now live in towns and cities. Many work in industrial and service jobs.

In 1992 Mexico joined Canada and the United States in signing the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA. This agreement lowered trade barriers between the three countries. Since the door to markets in the north opened wider, manufacturing in Mexico has expanded even more.

Tourism has become increasingly important to Mexico. Resort cities on the east and west coasts draw tourists from around the world. Popular spots include Acapulco, Cancún, and Mazatlán. Beach attractions, grand hotels, crafts, and restaurants are central to these cities' economies. Mexico City, old colonial towns, and dramatic scenery draw visitors also to the country's interior.

Daily life in Mexico is changing rapidly. Like their American neighbors, most Mexicans watch television and shop in modern stores. Traffic jams clog the cities during rush hours. Mexican family life is also changing. Families tend to be smaller now, with only two or three children. More and more women are working outside the home. Many more Mexicans are graduating from universities. Protestant churches are attracting new members, which challenges the traditional role of the Roman Catholic Church. Mexican politics have become more democratic than ever before. Even Mexican Indians, who for a long time had little influence on the government, are becoming participants in politics. While not fully economically developed, Mexico is a powerful partner in North American affairs.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Places and Regions* How has the balance between urban and rural settlement changed in Mexico?



INTERPRETING THE MAP This map shows trade among the United States and its NAFTA partners in billions of U.S. dollars. Numbers in parentheses show the percentage of each country's total exports. Trade among all three countries has greatly increased since NAFTA went into effect in 1994. Which country does more business with the United States? Which country sends the smaller percentage of its exports to the United States?

Section 2 Review

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Define conquistadores, haciendas, plaza, mestizos, dictator

Working with Sketch Maps On the map you created for Section 1, label Acapulco, Cancún, and Mazatlán. Which city is on the Caribbean coast?

Reading for the Main Idea

1. **The Uses of Geography** What powerful empire ruled much of what is now Mexico at the time of Spanish arrival?

2. **Human Systems** What were the two most important economic activities of colonial Mexico?

3. **Human Systems** What agreement has lowered trade barriers between Mexico and the rest of North America? When was it signed?

Critical Thinking

4. **Analyzing Information** In what ways did Spanish colonization shape Mexican culture? How did precolonial beliefs shape the practice of Christianity in Mexico?

Organizing What You Know

5. Create a time line of Mexican history. Use it to list key events from the time of Spanish arrival to the present.



Geography for Life

Mexican Migration

Migration changes populations, cultures, and economic systems. Migrants are attracted to new areas by pull factors, such as jobs and better opportunities. They leave areas because of push factors, like war, changing economies, droughts, or poor living conditions.

Mexico has a long history of migration to the United States. The idea of going north for better opportunities is deeply rooted among Mexican youths, particularly in rural areas of west-central Mexico. In the 1870s large numbers of Mexican migrants went north to work. In the early 1900s American landowners actively recruited Mexicans to work on farms in the United States. However, the Great Depression in the 1930s temporarily slowed migration. Later, an agreement between the U.S. and Mexican governments encouraged further migration of temporary farmworkers from Mexico from 1942 to 1964. The Immigration Act of 1990 greatly increased the number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States. As a result immigration, both legal and illegal, increased.

More people emigrate from Mexico than from any other country. Some 7 million people now living in the United States were born in Mexico. The major cause of migration between the two countries is the difference in wages. Simply put, Mexican workers can earn more money in the United States



The Nogales border crossing connects Arizona and Sonora.

than they can in Mexico. Many travel to the United States temporarily to work and send money to relatives in Mexico.

This migration has created a unique cultural landscape along the U.S.-Mexico border. Many Mexican Americans live along the border in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Many border towns are linked economically, and border crossings between the two countries are among the busiest in the world. This benefits the economies of both countries. The border region has developed a unique culture that blends American and Mexican ways of life. In fact, many geographers recognize the U.S.-Mexico border area as a distinct region. This region is sometimes called the borderlands.

However, it is estimated that about 2 million Mexicans are living in the United States illegally. In recent years, the United States has stepped up its border patrols and tried to block illegal immigration. Many people caught by patrols and returned to Mexico will try to cross the border again. Many Mexican migrants suffer mistreatment from "guides" called coyotes whom they pay to lead them across the border. Some illegal immigrants try to enter the United States in remote desert areas. Unprepared for the harsh conditions, some have died.



INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD *Mexicans wade across the shallow Rio Grande in the El Paso, Texas, area. Here the river has often cut new channels, sometimes changing the country in control of hundreds of acres. From what you can see in the photo, how have Mexico and the United States improved their ability to control their territory?*

Applying What You Know

- 1. Summarizing** How has migration from Mexico to the United States shaped the distribution of culture groups today?
- 2. Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** What are some of the political, economic, social, and environmental factors that contribute to Mexican migration to the United States?

Section
3

Mexico Today

READ TO DISCOVER

1. What are the economic and cultural regions of Mexico?
2. What challenges face Mexico?

Reading Strategy

PAIRED SUMMARIZING Read this section silently, making notes as you read. Working with a partner, take turns summarizing the material and your notes. Stop to discuss ideas that seem confusing. Include key terms and their definitions.

DEFINE

cash crops
maquiladoras

LOCATE

Guadalajara	Monterrey
Campeche	Tijuana
Tampico	Ciudad Juárez
Veracruz	

Mexico's Regions

Mexico is divided into 31 states and the capital district. Different parts of the country exhibit great geographical, economic, and cultural diversity. It is useful to divide the country into four regions for study.

Greater Mexico City Greater Mexico City is the cultural, economic, and political center of Mexico. This huge metropolis includes many smaller cities and may hold a fourth of Mexico's entire population. (See the graph on the next page.) It also generates much of the country's GDP.

Mexico City has monumental government buildings. It is also home to the country's largest university and greatest museums and theaters. The



This cat figure from the state of Oaxaca is an example of Mexican folk art.

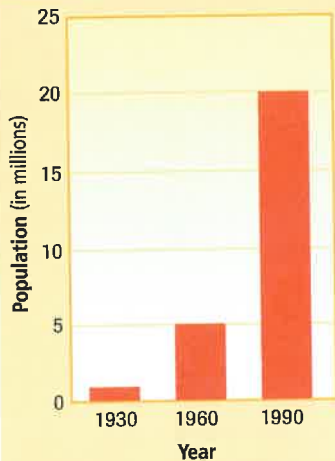
The States of Mexico



INTERPRETING THE MAP

The official name of Mexico is Estados Unidos Mexicanos, or United Mexican States. Compare this map to the physical map. What features seem to form natural borders for Sinaloa and Veracruz? Why might the smaller states be in south-central Mexico? What area has a political status similar to that of Washington, D.C.?

Mexico City's Population



Source: *Latin America and the Caribbean*, Blouet and Blouet, eds.

INTERPRETING THE GRAPH

Mexico City has experienced phenomenal growth. Approximately how many times larger was the 1990 population than the 1930 population? What do you predict for Mexico City's future growth?

headquarters of leading industries and banks, as well as the Mexican stock exchange, are located there. Millions of tourists come to Mexico City to see Aztec ruins and grand old colonial buildings. Major industries include cement, chemicals, construction, plastics, textiles, and tourism.

Mexico City's economic activity also draws many new residents. However, there are too few jobs. As a result, some people live in huge settlements of shacks built from waste wood and sheetmetal. Many people live without electricity, sewers, or a safe water supply.

Alongside this poverty, great wealth also exists in Mexico City. Exclusive boutiques and world-class restaurants attract tourists and upper-class residents. Districts with grand homes and luxury apartments extend for miles. At the city's center is the Zona Rosa, a stylish urban area.

Mexico City suffers from terrible air pollution, however. The city is located in a broad valley ringed by mountains. The mountains trap the pollution of thousands of factories and millions of cars. The government is trying to clear the air by reducing these emissions.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Places and Regions* What are some of Mexico City's leading industries?

Central Mexico Central Mexico stretches northwest of Mexico City and across the Mexican Plateau. Many cities there began as colonial mining or ranching centers. Mexico's second-largest city, Guadalajara, is located in this area. Guadalajara contains many buildings from the Spanish colonial period. Small towns with city squares and colonial churches are common.

Fertile valleys dot central Mexico. This was once colonial Mexico's great grain-producing region. Agriculture there is a mix of small family farms and medium-sized commercial farms. These farms grow a number of **cash crops**. Cash crops are crops grown for sale in a market. Trucks bringing fruits and vegetables from the area to the United States often jam border crossings. In recent years central Mexico has also been attracting new factories.

Construction of Guadalajara's immense cathedral began when the city was founded in 1542. It was not finished until the early 1700s. After being severely damaged by earthquakes, the old towers were replaced by the yellow-tiled spires that have become the city's symbol.



Gulf Lowlands and Southern Mexico

Throughout much of Mexican history, the Gulf lowlands between the cities of Campeche and Tampico were lightly settled. People living there used the region's hot humid tropical forests and savannas for grazing or growing sugarcane. Now large forest areas have been cleared for commercial farming and ranching. The region also includes Veracruz, an important seaport and communications center.

Rich deposits of oil and natural gas have long been key to this region's economy. The area is booming because of these deposits. With the development of the oil industry have come oil refineries, pipelines, petrochemical complexes, port facilities, and fertilizer plants.

Southern Mexico includes the mountainous areas south of Mexico City and the plains of the Yucatán Peninsula. This is Mexico's poorest region. It has few cities and little industry. In addition, transportation and telephone service are poorly developed. Schools are inadequate. More and more migrants head north hoping for a better life, either in Mexico City or in the United States.

Southern Mexico is also Mexico's most traditional region. Village life there has changed little over the last hundred years. Subsistence agriculture is common, and handicrafts provide much of the cash income. Mexican Indians make up about half of this area's population. Many speak Indian languages. For example, many of Yucatán's rural people speak Mayan.

✓ **READING CHECK:** **Human Systems** In what ways is southern Mexico the country's most traditional region?

Northern Mexico The large dry region of northern Mexico has become one of the most prosperous parts of the country. Much of the region's infrastructure is new and modern. The roads are good, and the telephones work well.

Monterrey is the great industrial city of the north. However, many other cities and towns have also industrialized and grown rapidly. Northern Mexico's factories and commercial farms draw migrant workers from all over Mexico. Cattle ranching, mining, and tourism are also important to northern Mexico's economy.



In the 1990s armed rebels from Chiapas, in southern Mexico, called for a redistribution of wealth. In this photo, rebellion supporters carry an image of Emiliano Zapata, who supported land reform during the Mexican Revolution of 1910 to 1920.



INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Pinacate National Park is among the many scenic attractions in northern Mexico. The region contains both bustling cities and sparsely populated desert areas. **From what you see in the photo, what are some of the physical processes that have affected northwestern Mexico in the past?**

Signs in the small border town of Nuevo Progreso, Tamaulipas, advertise various services. Many tourists take day trips from South Padre Island or Brownsville, Texas, to Nuevo Progreso.



FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHY

Border Towns The part of Mexico along the border definitely “faces north” in more than one sense. Many businesses have links with the United States. In fact, American companies own many of the special factories, called **maquiladoras** (mah-kee-lah-DOHR-ahs), that lie along the Mexican side of the border. These factories employ hundreds of thousands of Mexicans. Workers there assemble products for export, mostly to the United States. These products range from auto parts to toys. In addition, irrigated farms provide fruits and vegetables to markets in the United States and Europe during winter.

The border region also has many cultural links to the United States. American music, television, and other forms of entertainment are popular. The Spanish spoken in this part of Mexico is full of English words. Pairs of towns that straddle the border are beginning to function more like single cities. For example, Tijuana is increasingly linked to San Diego, California. Every day thousands of people move back and forth between cities like Ciudad Juárez and El Paso, Texas.

✓ **READING CHECK: Places and Regions** What links with the United States are found along Mexico’s border region?

U.S.–Mexico Border Region



INTERPRETING THE MAP Pairs of cities and towns lie along the U.S.–Mexico border. How do some of the cities’ names reflect their locations?

Challenges for the Future

Mexico is changing rapidly. Mexican politics are becoming more democratic. To stimulate growth, the country's leaders are reducing government controls on the economy. NAFTA's supporters believe that the treaty will boost economic growth. The Mexican middle class continues to grow. However, problems remain.

Geographers see several interrelated challenges in Mexico. One such challenge is economic inequality. Many Mexicans are poor, and much of Mexico's wealth lies in the hands of a few rich people. In general, Mexican Indians have fewer economic opportunities than other citizens. Reducing poverty might help create greater political stability as well as improve the country's economy. It might also slow migration out of Mexico. Migration to the United States, both legal and illegal, is common. Many Mexicans have achieved success in the United States. Some send money to their families back in Mexico. However, migration also takes skilled workers away from Mexico's economy.

Another challenge is reducing crime, much of which results from widespread poverty. Mexico is a main route for smuggling drugs into the United States. Profits from the drug trade have even tempted some government officials, including police, to break the law. Curbing crime will be key for further economic and social progress.

Finally, improving the country's poor infrastructure presents another challenge. Many Mexican communities do not have clean water supplies or modern sewers. This can cause health problems. Many of Mexico's roads and railways are worn and out-of-date. Mexicans cannot sell their products if their goods cannot get to market. All these are problems that further economic progress may help solve.



A young girl looks out over the Matamoros city dump. Several families routinely search the garbage for items they can sell or use. Hazardous wastes are often dumped there illegally. Garbage that is burned in the open sends thick smoke over the area. **How might conditions at this dump affect the water supply?**

READING CHECK: *Human Systems* What are some important challenges facing Mexico?

Section 3

Review

go
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.com **Homework Practice Online**
Keyword: SW3 HP10

Define cash crops, maquiladoras

Working with Sketch Maps

On the map you created for Section 2, label Guadalajara, Campeche, Tampico, Veracruz, Monterrey, Tijuana, and Ciudad Juárez. Which cities are located at or near sea level? Which cities are located in mountainous areas or on the Mexican Plateau?

Reading for the Main Idea

- Environment and Society** What geographical features make Mexico City's pollution problems worse?
- Human Systems** Why is migration to the United States a disadvantage for the Mexican economy?

Critical Thinking

- Making Generalizations** In what ways is Mexico both a rich country and a poor country?
- Drawing Inferences** How might economic progress help increase political stability in Mexico?

Organizing What You Know

- Copy the graphic organizer shown below. Use it to list the four economic and cultural regions of Mexico and their major economic activities.

Region	Economic activities
Greater Mexico City	
Central Mexico	
Gulf lowlands and southern Mexico	
Northern Mexico	

CITIES & SETTLEMENTS

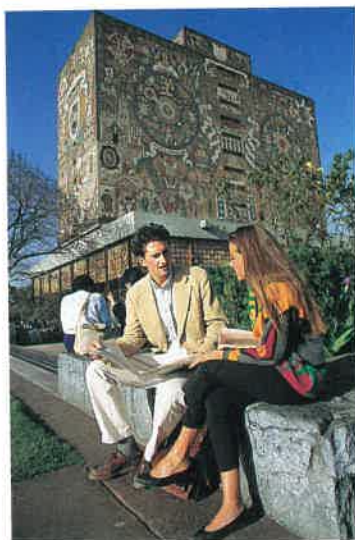
Mexico City

Environment and Society

Mexico City is one of the largest cities in the world and one of the oldest cities in the Americas. The city's rich history and tremendous growth have made it Mexico's cultural, economic, and political center as well. However, Mexico City also has serious environmental problems which the city's people are working to solve.

An Indian and European City

In the mid-1300s the Aztec founded a town called Tenochtitlán in central Mexico. According to legend, their god advised them to build where they saw an eagle eating a snake while perched on a cactus. This legend is now represented on Mexico's flag. When the Spanish arrived in 1519, Tenochtitlán was home to perhaps 300,000 people. It was larger than any city in Europe at that time. In 1521 the Spanish defeated the Aztec and destroyed their city. On its ruins a new Spanish settlement rose—what became known as the Ciudad de México, or Mexico City.



Mosaics decorate the library of the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

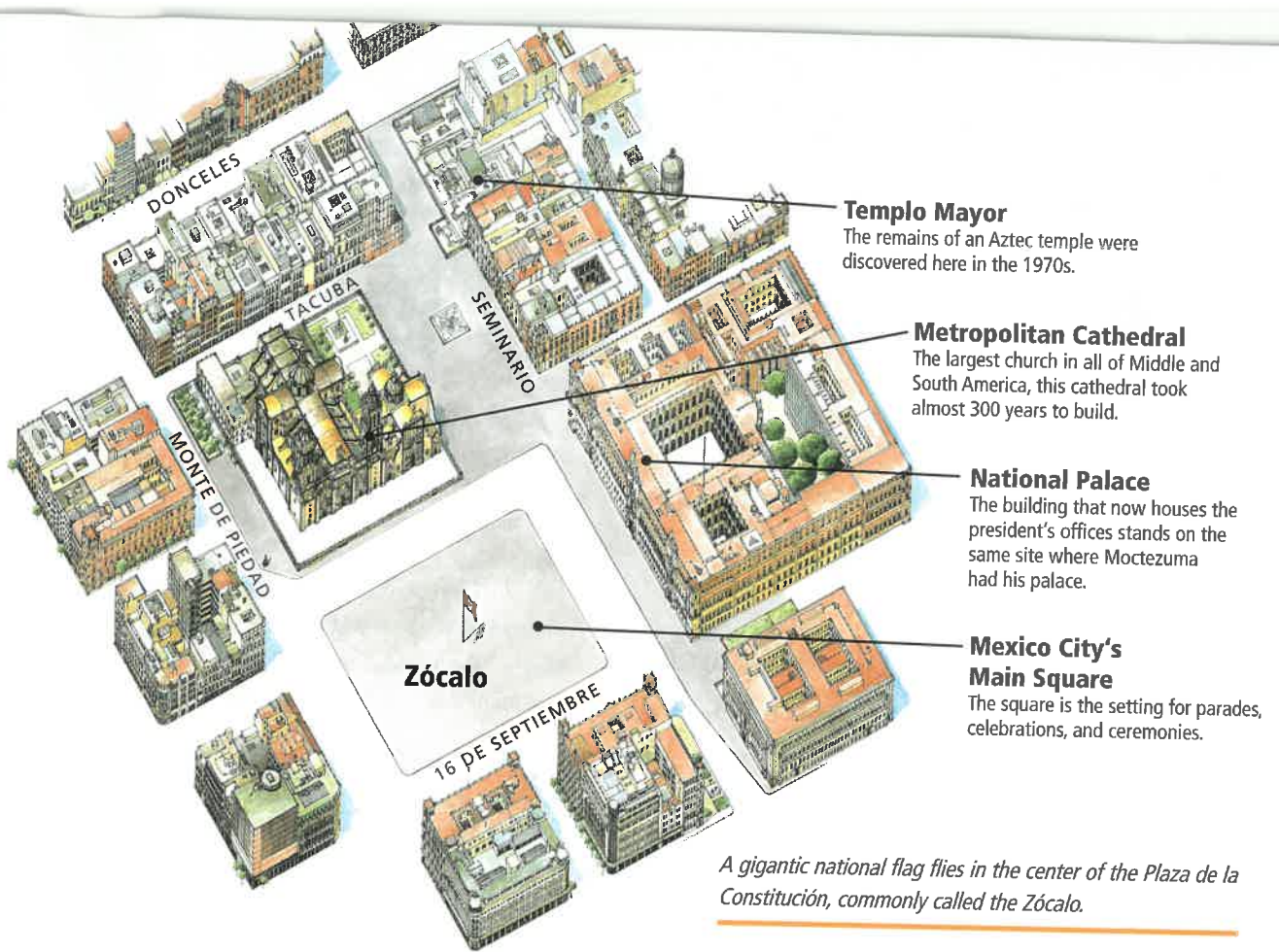
Today Mexico City is a lively modern city that is proud of its history and culture. One can visit more than 100 museums there. Modern skyscrapers tower over Aztec ruins and Spanish colonial buildings. Few other cities offer such cultural variety.

The historical center of Mexico City is its main square, the Zócalo, where the center of Tenochtitlán once stood. Today it is one of the world's largest public squares. Bordering the Zócalo are some of Mexico City's oldest and grandest buildings. The Metropolitan Cathedral dates to the mid-1500s and is the largest church in Latin America. In the 1700s and 1800s, the block-long National Palace was home to

Mexico's rulers. Today it houses government offices. Inside, huge murals by Diego Rivera, one of Mexico's famous artists, trace Mexican history from Aztec times to the early 1900s. On the square's northeast corner are the remains of the Templo Mayor, the great Aztec ceremonial pyramid. Southwest of the Zócalo, Chapultepec Park is one of the world's largest urban parks. The area was once used by Aztec emperors.

Pockets of old historic buildings are scattered throughout Mexico City. Many mark former villages that have been absorbed by the city's rapid expansion. The modern city completely surrounds these old towns. A well-known modern area includes the National University in southern Mexico City. Many of its buildings are covered with murals. The main library is decorated with tile mosaics showing Mexico's history and scientific achievements.

Cars zoom around a traffic circle on Reforma Avenue. The monument honors those who fought for Mexico's independence from Spain.



Templo Mayor
The remains of an Aztec temple were discovered here in the 1970s.

Metropolitan Cathedral
The largest church in all of Middle and South America, this cathedral took almost 300 years to build.

National Palace
The building that now houses the president's offices stands on the same site where Moctezuma had his palace.

Mexico City's Main Square
The square is the setting for parades, celebrations, and ceremonies.

A gigantic national flag flies in the center of the Plaza de la Constitución, commonly called the Zócalo.

Environmental Problems and Solutions

Some 18 to 25 million people live in the Mexico City metropolitan area today. By most accounts, Mexico City is now the second-largest urban area in the world, after Tokyo.

Mexico City's huge growing population has caused serious environmental problems including air pollution. Some 4.5 million motor vehicles and numerous factories release chemicals into the air. The resulting smog can cause breathing problems, sting eyes, and burn throats. As you read earlier, the city's location in a basin makes the situation worse. In addition, the city's industries and people use huge amounts of water. Heavy pumping from wells has lowered the water table under the city. This has caused the ground to settle and buildings in many areas to sink. Because the city lies on a dry lake bed the soils underneath are soft and unstable. In some parts of downtown, buildings have sunk as much as 29 feet (9 m) since 1900. The ground beneath the Metropolitan Cathedral has shifted so much that the building has cracked down the middle.

In 1985 a major earthquake damaged much of Mexico City. This experience raised awareness of the city's pressing environmental needs. As a result, work

began in 1991 to save the Metropolitan Cathedral. Private companies have spent \$300 million to repair other old buildings. Many have been turned into much-needed apartments.

Efforts were also launched to improve the city's air quality. Many factories were forced to close or cut production. In the late 1980s city officials developed a system to restrict the use of cars. Now cars with certain license plate numbers can only be driven on specific days. Since 1991 all new cars must have anti-pollution devices. Other laws ban nearly half of the city's older cars from the streets on "emergency days," when pollution levels are high. These measures seem to be working. In 1999 Mexico City experienced only 5 such days, compared to 95 of them in 1994.

Applying What You Know

- 1. Summarizing** How has Mexico City changed since it was founded in the mid-1300s?
- 2. Comparing** How do environmental changes in Mexico City compare to changes in large U.S. cities you have read about, such as Los Angeles?

CHAPTER 10

Review

HOLT

Geography's Impact Video Series

Review the video to answer the closing question:
Do you think emigration from Mexico to the United States hurts or helps Mexico? Why?

Building Vocabulary

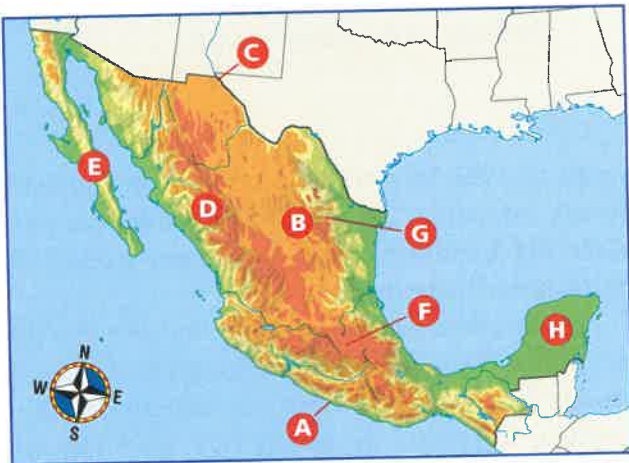
On a separate sheet of paper, explain the following terms by using them correctly in sentences.

isthmus	haciendas	dictator
sinkholes	plaza	cash crops
conquistadores	mestizos	maquiladoras

Locating Key Places

On a separate sheet of paper, match the letters on the map with their correct labels.

Sierra Madre Oriental	Baja California
Sierra Madre Occidental	Acapulco
Mexico City	Monterrey
Yucatán Peninsula	Ciudad Juárez



Understanding the Main Ideas

Section 1

1. **Physical Systems** Why does northwestern Mexico have dry weather?

Section 2

2. **Human Systems** What peoples ruled Mexico before the arrival of Spaniards?
3. **Human Systems** Why is Roman Catholicism the most common religion in Mexico?

Section 3

4. **Places and Regions** In what ways is Greater Mexico City important to the entire country?
5. **Human Systems** How have Mexican politics changed in recent years?

Thinking Critically

1. **Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** Review what you read about the resort cities on the east and west coasts of Mexico. How might "resort Mexico" be considered a functional region? How might it be a perceptual region?
2. **Comparing** How is Mexico City's status in Mexico similar to that of New York, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C., in the United States? What problems might these cities share?
3. **Making Generalizations and Predictions** How might migration from Mexico shape cultural change in the United States?

Using the Geographer's Tools

1. **Analyzing Graphs** Look at the graph of Mexico City's population. If growth continued at the same pace, what do you think the city's population might be in 2020? What factors might affect the future growth of Greater Mexico City?
2. **Preparing Maps** Draw a sketch map of Mexico and its individual states. Then use the chapter map to locate and label the main cities. Use maps you find in library resources to check if you placed the cities correctly within the states. Revise your map if necessary.
3. **Preparing Maps** Create a map of the region near the border of Mexico and the United States. Use this textbook and other sources to identify Mexican and U.S. towns that lie across the border from each other. How might the economic and cultural features of Mexican border towns be different from cities farther south? What links would these border towns have with U.S. cities that other Mexican cities probably do not?

Writing about Geography

Write the text of an imaginary interview with a Mexican farmer who grows one or more cash crops. Include the farmer's viewpoint on the importance of trade with the United States and Canada. How does lifting trade barriers affect this farmer?

SKILL BUILDING



Geography for Life

Illustrating Geographic Information

Human Systems Create a poster or sketch map illustrating the four regions of Mexico. Use pictures and captions to describe the main cultural, economic, and natural features of these regions. Include information about the relationships among these features.

Interpreting Graphs

Use the information from the bar graph below to answer the questions that follow.



- U.S. imports from Mexico increased every year except which one?
 - 1998
 - 1999
 - 2000
 - 2001
- The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect in 1994. Before this agreement, U.S. exports to Mexico were greater than imports. What general changes in U.S. exports and imports can you see since then?

Analyzing Primary Sources

Read Michael Parfit's comments about Mexico. Then answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper.

"Rough by reputation, exotic even in name, the Sierra Madre Occidental (or Mother Mountains of the West) remains one of the last untrammelled [untamed] wildernesses in Mexico. The northern portion of the 800-mile-long range is famed for its immense, mile-deep gorges—Mexico's answer to the Grand Canyon. Such daunting topography has proved a barrier to settlement for centuries—and a godsend to renegades from Geronimo to Pancho Villa."

- What makes part of the Sierra Madre Occidental "Mexico's answer to the Grand Canyon"?
 - its 800-mile-long length
 - mile-deep gorges
 - its tall mountains
 - a desert climate
- Why do you think these mountains are both a barrier to settlement and a good place for people trying to hide from authorities?

Alternative Assessment

PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY

Learning about Your Local Geography

Individual Project: Field Work

You have read about efforts to improve air quality in Mexico City. Conduct research to learn about air pollution in your area. Contact your local air quality board, television station weather department, or a local environmental group. Request information on the air quality of your area. If possible, collect data going back several years. Graph the data. What patterns do you see over time?

Internet connect

Internet Activity: go.hrw.com
KEYWORD: SW3 GT10

Choose a topic on Mexico to:

- take the GeoMap challenge to test your knowledge of geography!
- create a brochure on Mexican holidays and culture.
- learn about the physical features and climate of Mexico's coastlines.