Chapter 10
Geography of Mexico

- Hernan Cortes - Spanish explorer who conquered Mexico
  - Described physical features of Mexico as: Crumpled piece of paper
- Mountain ranges –
  - Sierra Madre Occidental – _________________ coast
  - Sierra Madre Oriental – – _________________ coast
  - Plateau (area of high, flat land) lies between
- The Heartland Region
- Natural Hazards
  - Central plateau is geologically unstable
  - Mexico is located at the intersection of _________ tectonic plates – North American, Caribbean, Pacific, and Cocos plates
- Climate Factors
  - Low precipitation to the north, moderate to the south
  - Higher elevation keeps temperatures mild, even though it is in the tropics

The Four Coastal Regions

1. Northern Pacific Coast
   - Dry, hot, and little population
   - Some of countries best farmlands – because of irrigation
   - Baja California – mostly mountainous desert

2. Southern Pacific Coast
   - Smaller mountain ranges
   - Little farmland
   - Large tourism business

3. Gulf Coast Plain
   - Vast deposits of petroleum and natural gas along the lain and offshore
   - One of world’s major oil-producing regions

4. The Yucatan Peninsula
   - Generally flat
   - Limestone bedrock that creates underground caverns, Landscape is dotted with _________
• A Place of Three Cultures
• Plaza de las Tres Culturas
  – The Three Cultures – is located on the site of an Aztec center that fell to the Spanish in a 1521 battle
  – In the center there are restored ruins of an Aztec temple pyramid
    • One side has a 1609 Spanish church
    • Another side has twin office buildings of glass and concrete
    • A busy eight-lane highway runs past the plaza
• 3 Cultures
  1. Native American
  2. Spanish
  3. mestizo
• Aztecs and Spaniards
• Early 1400’s, Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan was center of an empire
  – Built on an island in a lake, current site of Mexico City
• The Spanish Conquest
  – Hernan Cortes, with 600 soldiers, marched into Tenochtitlan in 1519
  – Spaniards destroyed the Aztec empire within 2 years
  – Became colony of New Spain
• New Spain
  – Four social classes emerged
    1. Peninsulares – born in Spain
    2. Criollos – Spanish ancestry born in America
    3. Mestizos – mix of Native American and Europeans
    4. Indians – Native to America
• Road to Democracy
What events led to the eventual development of Democracy in Mexico?
• Resentment between classes
  – ___________________________ – a criollos priest
  – Sparked a war for independence
• Independence did not mean democracy
– 100 years to achieve democracy
– End of 1800’s, Mexico stable enough to attract foreign capital and industry
  • Oil reserves developed
– Gap between rich and poor grew even bigger

The Mexican Revolution
– 1910, peasants and middle-class Mexicans rebelled, standing up to the military dictator
– By 1920, a new president and a new constitution

• Social Conditions
  • Rural Life
    – After the revolution, the government began program of buying out landowners and breaking up large haciendas – ____________________________
    – Ejidos – farmland owned by members of a rural community practiced subsistence farming
    – 1/3 of Mexican farms are ____________________________ (large commercial farms)
    – 3-4 million rural families are migrant workers

• Urban Life
  – ¾ of Mexico’s population live in cities
  – Better opportunity for jobs
  – Majority of people are very poor

• Economic Activities
  • 1993, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) was designed to compete with the European Union, a free-trade network in Europe

• Major Industries
  – Petroleum
  – ____________________________ – the “smokeless industry”

• Border Industries
  – ____________________________ - factories that assemble products almost exclusively for consumers in the U.S.
    • Responsible for large amount of air and water pollution