

Name _____

Date _____

Modern Latin America

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. After the conquistadors defeated the Incan and Aztec Empires, settlers began immigrating to the New World to set up societies. While the Native Americans were being ravaged by disease, the Europeans and their descendants were organizing governments and colonies. Just like the colonists in North America, the people in Latin America began to question rule from abroad. By the mid-1800s, the Latin American countries were independent from Europe. And for the next 200 years, Latin America would struggle with how to handle the power. When they succeeded, they would flourish; when they failed, millions of citizens would suffer. This tug-of-war was a time known as the postcolonial era, simply meaning "after colonialism."

Which of the following best symbolizes the postcolonial era?

- A. a downhill slide
 - B. a rollercoaster
 - C. an uphill climb
 - D. a flat course
2. The first colony in Latin America to gain freedom was Haiti. It had previously been a French colony called St. Domingue. In 1791, while the ruling class of St. Domingue was busy worrying about the French Revolution, the slaves took advantage of the squabbling and revolted. Under the leadership of Toussaint Louverture, the slaves managed to overthrow the government. In 1804, Haiti was declared a free country.

Other countries also took advantage of European distraction to break free. After the French Revolution, Emperor Napoleon was stomping all over Europe. He had invaded Spain and Portugal. In Mexico in 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla rallied Native Americans and mestizos, or people of mixed Native American and Spanish heritage, to fight for independence. They lost, and Hidalgo was executed, but the spirit of revolution began to spread. In 1821, Mexico gained independence from Spain when a Creole named Vicente Guerrero, who had been charged with killing revolutionaries, decided to unite with them instead.

Because the ruling class of St. Domingue was busy worrying about the French Revolution,

- A. Mexico gained independence.
- B. Toussaint Louverture took back control of Haiti.
- C. Napoleon invaded Spain and Portugal.
- D. Haiti gained independence.

3. Even though Mexico became independent in 1821, people of Spanish origin still held most of the power. In fact, even though they were only one percent of the population, they owned 85 percent of the land! These rich estates were known as haciendas. The wealthy people ruthlessly stole almost all the land from the natives and mestizos. Under the independent power, the new improvements really only benefited rich people.

Emiliano Zapata led a group of peasants in revolt against this new, unequal independence in 1910. He wanted to return the land to peasants, so he led the burning of hacienda buildings to bring them back to traditional communities. Francisco "Pancho" Villa also led revolts against the haciendas, though he didn't burn them. Zapata and Villa gained many followers, but the Creole landowners had control of the cities. They eventually killed Zapata and Villa. The landowners knew that they couldn't continue to rule without winning more support from the people, so they gave back a little bit of land. The vast majority of Mexicans remained poor.

According to the passage, when Mexico became independent,

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| A. the benefits were felt mostly by the rich people. | B. the peasants gained total control of the government. |
| C. haciendas were available for peasants to buy. | D. Creole landowners supported Zapata and Villa. |

4. Before the Great Depression, Argentina was making lots of money from meat production. But when the Depression hit, the people turned to authoritarian leadership. The military general Juan Perón took power after World War II. His wife Eva Perón was quite popular, and while she was alive, Perón enjoyed much support. She was especially popular with poor workers known as the descamisados, or "shirtless ones." But a popular leader with a pretty face can distract from the abuses behind the scenes. During Perón's dictatorship, which lasted until his death, he supported the "Dirty War," in which the government sponsored the killing of up to 30,000 people who opposed government views. The people who were killed were known as the "disappeared," since they were taken out of their homes or off the street by secret police and never heard from again. It is assumed that the government killed them. Finally, in 1983 a civilian government was reinstated.

Who were the "disappeared"?

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| A. poor workers who loved Eva Perón | B. secret police in Argentina |
| C. 30,000 people who were killed in Argentina | D. the civilian government that was reinstated in 1983 |

5. During the Cold War (about 1947-1991), the United States and the USSR were the two global superpowers, bent on each other's destruction. They basically asked all the other countries in the world to pick a side. Communist, or left wing, governments gained the powerful support of the Soviets. Governments that leaned more toward capitalist, or right wing policies, were supported by the United States. Whether they were communist or not, postcolonial Latin American governments had some ruthless and violent leaders.

To fight against the Soviet Union, the United States actively intervened in communist Latin American countries like Cuba, which was led by Fidel Castro and ridden with corruption, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Chile. For the United States, communist equaled “evil.” But it wasn't so simple. The United States supported parties who wanted to kick the communists out of power. But the United States found itself supporting some ruthless dictators just because they weren't communists.

Which of these best describes the relationship between Cuba and the USSR?

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| A. The USSR fought for the destruction of Cuba since their governments differed. | B. Cuba fought against the USSR while defending the United States. |
| C. The USSR supported Cuba, and they both had communist governments. | D. Cuba was a colony of the USSR, so Cuba had no choice but to defend the USSR. |

6. Militant dictators had control of Guatemala until the 1950s. One dictator was Jacobo Arbenz Guzman. He had enacted land reforms that were communist in nature, and the United States was strongly anti-communist. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) helped to overthrow him in 1954. But this coup was followed by decades of violence under the leadership of a military junta. The Guatemalans only began to have a democratic government in 1996, and there is still a strong military force there. Many blame the United States for their role in these events.

Why do some blame the United States for violence in Guatemala?

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| A. because the US did not intervene during Jacobo Arbenz Guzman's violent rule | B. because the US actively supported Jacobo Arbenz Guzman |
| C. because the CIA's coup allowed a military junta to take control | D. because it is believed the CIA supported the military junta |

7. The most controversial United States intervention happened in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan Somoza family held control of the country until 1979. That year, a group called the Sandinistas revolted against the government. They were very far left and connected to Cuba and the USSR; these countries actually supplied their weapons. The United States supported an anti-communist group called the Contras, who fought against the Sandinistas for power.

In 1983, Congress said that President Reagan couldn't support the Contras anymore, but the United States continued to supply them with weapons secretly by sending the weapons to Iran, who then shipped them over to the Contras. This was during the Iran-Iraq war, and it became known as the Iran-Contra Affair. The Contras and Sandinistas reached a peace treaty in 1987, though, and there has been a moderate government in place since then.

Which of the following best describes the relationship between Iran and Nicaragua?

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| A. Tension began to rise between Iran and Nicaragua in 1979, so President Reagan helped supply both countries with weapons. | B. In 1979, Iran sent troops to Nicaragua to help the Contras fight against the Sandinistas for power. |
| C. Iran was connected to the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, and Iranians helped the Sandinistas revolt against the Nicaraguan government. | D. Iran, acting as the middle man, sent weapons from the United States to the Contras, an anti-communist group in Nicaragua. |
8. Like Argentina, Brazil also turned to dictatorship after the Great Depression. Their dictator was Getúlio Vargas. He didn't start out as a tyrant, but eventually he turned Brazil into a fascist state. Fascism is the most extreme form of conservative government. Vargas ruled until 1945 as the poor lived in favelas, or slums. Upon his overthrow, Brazil slowly returned to a democratic rule.

Civil war broke out in El Salvador in 1979 between left wing and right wing guerilla fighters. The right wing fighters had United States support. The war ended years later, after 75,000 people had been killed. Finally, in 1992, the two sides signed a peace treaty.

After Getúlio Vargas was overthrown, Brazil became

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| A. a democracy again. | B. a dictatorship again. |
| C. a communist country. | D. a part of Argentina. |