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Date _____

The Mexican Revolution

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

In 1876, Porfirio Díaz, who had entered politics after a military career, used force to unseat the Mexican president. He then seized power for himself in a sham election. Except for the four years between 1880 and 1884 (during which he remained unofficially in command), Díaz held the presidency until 1911.

The period spanning Porfirio's presidency is known as the Porfiriato. It was marked by dictatorial rule, suppression of civil liberties, and an extremely unbalanced economy.

Díaz confiscated communally-owned indigenous lands and offered them to foreign investors for purchase. These deals were lucrative, and money poured into the country. The small upper class enjoyed the new wealth. But with their land ripped away, Mexico's large peasant population had no option but to become laborers for the new landowners. They sank ever deeper into poverty.

Notes

Mexico's economic boom started to collapse at the beginning of the 20th century, causing increased dissatisfaction with Díaz's government. One prominent dissenter was wealthy businessman and writer Francisco Madero. In 1908, Madero published *La sucesión presidencial en 1910*, or *The Presidential Succession in 1910*. Soon after, he established the Anti-Reelectionist Party and announced his candidacy for president.

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At first, Díaz didn't view Madero as a credible threat, but this changed as Madero gained popular support. Díaz eventually resorted to corruption, imprisoning Madero on false charges and winning the June 26 election while Madero sat in jail.

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Madero remained undaunted. Once released from prison, he fled to the United States and called on his fellow countrymen to initiate his Plan of San Luis Potosí, an armed overthrow of Díaz on November 20.

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Although the November 20 date didn't pan out, Madero's call was heard. Over the next six months, disparate revolutionary militias united around the singular goal of ousting Díaz. The fighting was too widespread for Díaz to suppress, and in May of 1911, his regime finally toppled. Several months later, Madero officially became president. The Porfiriato was over.

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Francisco Madero was intent on reforming Mexico's political system specifically, transforming Mexico into a democracy. He was less committed, however, to social and economic reforms. This was a source of consternation to revolutionary leaders like Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, who had engaged in guerilla warfare to help Madero gain office.

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Unlike Madero, who was a member of a wealthy, land-owning family, Zapata and Villa were from poor peasant families that had been directly impacted by the unjust land grabs. They wanted land to be removed from landowners and returned to the peasants.

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This was alarming to the United States. By this time, about a quarter of Mexico's land was owned by American companies, and Zapata and Villa's land reforms would be economically disadvantageous to them.

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Madero's own general, Victoriano Huerta, was willing to conspire with the United States, along with various anti-Madero factions in Mexico, to overthrow Madero. In February of 1913, Madero was forcibly removed from office and executed, and Huerta assumed command of the country. Once again, Mexico was under the rule of a dictator.

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4. b'

As they had done in 1910 and 1911, revolutionaries across Mexico united to abolish dictatorial rule, overthrowing Huerta in 1914. But they disagreed about what should happen next.

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The revolutionaries were divided into two broad factions: the Conventionistas and the Constitutionistas. The Conventionistas, which included leaders Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, prioritized transforming the social order by redistributing land. The Constitutionistas, which included leaders Venustiano Carranza and \xc3\x81lvaro Obreg\xc3\xbbn, prioritized transforming the political system by establishing a representative democracy.

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The two groups were unable to work out a resolution, and civil war erupted. After much bloodshed, the Constitutionistas, who had the support of US President Woodrow Wilson, emerged victorious. They elected Carranza as president and passed the Mexican Constitution of 1917. In addition to political changes, this document called for socioeconomic reforms, including protections for workers and land redistribution.

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5. b'

Chaos and upheaval in Mexican politics did not end with the 1917 Constitution. Carranza and his government largely ignored the socioeconomic reforms that the Constitution promised\xe2\x80\x94as did \xc3\x81lvaro Obreg\xc3\xbbn, who was elected president in 1920. Throughout the 1920s, every presidential election was followed by uprisings.

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It wasn't until L\xc3\xa1zaro C\xc3\xa1rdenas became president in 1934 that substantive socioeconomic changes were finally enacted, including strengthening of labor unions and nationalization of the oil industry. Also under C\xc3\xa1rdenas, land reform occurred at last\xe2\x80\x94with over 70,000 square miles redistributed.

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