

Name _____

Date _____

Discovering America - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. We could look at America as a landmass: a vast continent of mountains, rivers and plains stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The people who discovered this place were Native Americans.

About 120,000 years ago, the Earth fell into an ice age. Temperatures dropped, the polar ice caps grew and ocean levels fell. These lower ocean levels revealed a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska. Roughly 30,000 years ago, nomadic hunting groups followed giant herds of woolly mammoth across that bridge to America. These were America's first human inhabitants. They inhabited this land for 25,000 years before Europeans came over on giant ships.

These first Americans were nomadic: they didn't form permanent settlements or towns but instead moved whenever food ran out. Around 7,000 years ago, some tribes began to farm and settled down in permanent villages.

What is the main purpose of the second paragraph of this passage?

A. to define the term "nomadic"



B.

to explain why and how Native Americans discovered America

In the first paragraph of this passage, the author states that "The people who discovered [America] were Native Americans." The second paragraph then explains how and why the Native Americans first traveled from Siberia to America. "Earth fell into an ice age," which "revealed a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska," and Native Americans "followed...herds of woolly mammoth across that bridge."

C. to describe the effect of the Ice Age on early weather patterns

D. to explain why early Native Americans relied on hunting woolly mammoth to survive

2. Over time, the first Americans spread out across the land. In the Southwest, the Anasazi built elaborate caves into the face of cliffs. These caves are still visible today. Around 3,300 years ago, tens of thousands of Anasazi mysteriously deserted their cliff dwellings. Their descendants (Hopi, Zuni and others) are now known as the Pueblo tribes. In the Mississippi area, the Mississippi people became known as mound builders because of the large platform mounds they constructed for their temples.

According to this passage, the Pueblo tribes

- A. abandoned their settlements to join the Anasazi.
- B. destroyed their settlements before leaving the Southwest.
- C. descended from the Anasazi.
- D. left no evidence of their settlements.

This passage states that "[The Anasazi's] descendants (Hopi, Zuni and others) are now known as the Pueblo tribes." Therefore, the Pueblo tribes descended from the Anasazi.

3. In the Great Plains, the Cheyenne, Sioux and other tribes hunted and searched for food. For a long time, they were mostly unable to hunt the mighty buffalo. This changed when the Spanish arrived and brought horses. With this development, the tribes produced excellent horsemen and formed large, powerful hunting groups.

According to this passage, the arrival of horses in the Great Plains

- A. allowed the Cheyenne and the Sioux to hunt buffalo.
- B. destroyed the buffalo's habitat in the Great Plains.
- C. made the Spanish into better horse riders.
- D. caused the Cheyenne and the Sioux to move to the Great Plains.

According to the passage, "For a long time, [the Cheyenne and Sioux] were mostly unable to hunt the mighty buffalo," but "this changed when the Spanish brought horses."

4. The Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Creek tribes lived in America's eastern woodlands. Europeans would eventually call them the “five civilized tribes” because they had government systems that Europeans easily comprehended and because they assimilated into European culture more easily than other tribes. In the 1700s, for example, some members of these tribes owned plantations with slaves. Because the term “civilized” implies that other tribes were not, historians have abandoned this term. These tribes are now mostly known as the Five Tribes, not to be confused with the Five Nations of the Iroquois.

What is the meaning of the word “abandoned” in the passage above?

- A. neglected
B. left a place because of danger
C. given up
D. easily understood



C.

given up

The passage explains what the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole and Creek were “once called” by the Europeans (“the five civilized tribes”) and what they later became “mostly known as” (“the Five Tribes”) after “historians abandoned” the earlier term. These details show that here, “abandoned” means “given up.”

5. While most tribes in North America formed relatively modest-sized towns and nomadic groups, Native Americans in Mesoamerica developed into three huge empires: the Aztecs, the Mayans and the Incas.

The Aztec empire was centered in Tenochtitlán, an enormous city in the middle of a lake with 100,000 inhabitants. Aztec society consisted of distinct social classes: nobles, peasants and slaves. The Aztecs also had a powerful standing army with a corps of professional warriors whose rank depended on how many prisoners of war they had captured.

The Aztecs also engaged in human sacrifice. At times, Aztecs sacrificed 1,000 people per day. One Aztec account, which is likely exaggerated, notes that during the construction of the great stone temple in Tenochtitlán, 84,000 people were sacrificed in four days.

What is the main purpose of the second paragraph of this passage?

- A. to suggest that accounts of the Aztecs' human sacrifices are exaggerated



- B. to describe the location and the structure of the Aztec empire

The passage begins by identifying three large Native American empires, including the Aztecs. The second paragraph then describes the location of the Aztec Empire: "...centered in Tenochtitlán, an enormous city in the middle of a lake with 100,000 inhabitants." It also describes the structure of the empire: "Aztec society consisted of distinct social classes: nobles, peasants and slaves."

- C. to contrast the Aztec empire with the Mayan empire

- D. to support the claim that the Aztecs were peaceful and did not practice warfare

6. Montezuma (sometimes spelled Moctezuma) was the Aztec ruler at the time the conquistadors arrived in Mexico in 1519. The conquistadors led Spain's conquest of Mexico and Peru; "conquistador" means "conqueror" in Spanish. Hernando Cortés led the conquistadors on a rampage through Mexico, destroying villages and weakening the empire. Eventually, Cortes formed an alliance with the city of Tlaxcala, and with the help of its residents, he conquered Tenochtitlán. Montezuma greeted Cortes, and according to some reports, Cortés played a ceremonial Aztec board game with Montezuma before taking him hostage. The Aztecs were known for playing board games that had ceremonial and religious meanings.

According to this passage, why was Cortés able to conquer Tenochtitlán?



- A. Cortés formed an alliance with the people of Tlaxcala.

The sentence "Eventually, Cortés formed an alliance with the city of Tlaxcala, and with the help of its residents, he conquered Tenochtitlán" supports this answer.

- B. Cortés arrived in Mexico in 1519 when Montezuma was the Aztec ruler.

- C. The Aztec soldiers were playing board games when Cortés arrived and were not prepared to fight.

- D. Montezuma was sick when Cortés arrived and was not able to direct the army.

7. Mayan civilization flourished from 300-1000 CE. The Mayans were based on the Yucatán Peninsula. They built giant temples, pyramids, palaces and ball courts. The Mayans had a written language, studied math and astronomy and used their astronomical measurements to create the most accurate calendar in the world at that time.

What is the meaning of the word "flourished" in the passage above?

- A. was physically healthy

- B. held up something in an excited way



- C. did very well

Details from the passage about the accomplishments of Mayan civilization, like "They built giant temples, pyramids, palaces and ball courts" and "had a written language," show that in this passage, "flourished" means "did very well."

- D. made a bold gesture

8. Incan civilization began in today's Peru and eventually spread north to Ecuador and south to Chile. The empire flourished in the 15th and 16th centuries, expanding rapidly through military conquest and peaceful assimilation. By the time the Spanish conquistadors arrived, however, the Incan empire was sprawling and difficult to control. The Spanish used this to their advantage. They set one city against another until the empire was destroyed.

In the passage above, what is the purpose of the underlined sentence?

- ✓ A. to introduce the topic of the Incan empire by explaining where it was located
- This sentence includes specific details about the location of the Incan empire, which "began in Peru" and "spread north to Ecuador and south to Chile." The passage goes on to describe the organization of the Incan empire and how it flourished. So, this sentence serves to introduce the Incan empire by explaining its location.*
- B. to introduce the topic of South American countries by explaining a similarity between Ecuador, Peru and Chile
- C. to support the claim that historical empires cannot always be seen on today's maps
- D. to support the claim that some ancient civilizations spread in two directions

9. Christopher Columbus wanted to find a western route from Europe to Asia. He was looking for gold, spices and trade routes. Spain agreed to finance his trip, and on August 3, 1492, Columbus set out on an expedition that changed the world. Two months after Columbus left Spain, just as his crew was planning to mutiny and turn the ships back to Spain, a lookout spotted land. It was October 12 at 2:00 AM, and the lookout saw the moonlight reflected on white, sandy beaches. Columbus and his crew had arrived at what they considered “the New World” and what would come to be known as the Americas. This New World was not Asia (as Columbus believed), nor was it empty. Columbus had sailed to the islands of the Bahamas, and the locals swam out to greet him. The Arawak men and women welcomed Columbus's crew with gifts and hospitality. However, Columbus soon took some of the Arawak as slaves. He thought they could lead him to gold.

Which of the following would be the best title for this passage?



- A. Discovering America while Searching for Asia

This passage is mostly about Columbus's search for a route to Asia from Europe and his accidental discovery of the Americas on the way. Details like “Christopher Columbus wanted to find a western route from Europe to Asia” and “This New World was not Asia (as Columbus believed)” support this answer.

- B. The Arawak People’s Hospitality Towards Columbus

- C. European and Native American Names for America

- D. Columbus’s Crew Revolts!

10. Columbus was an expert sailor who led an expedition across the ocean, but he wasn't sailing for science. He wanted gold, and his goal was to reach Asia. He believed the land that he "discovered" was in fact part of Asia. He did not know that he had sailed to another continent. Columbus returned to Spain after exploring Cuba and Hispaniola. He reported to the royal court about the amount of gold, exaggerating his findings. The Spanish monarchs gave Columbus the title "Admiral of the Ocean Sea" and promised him 10% of the gold and spices he found for them. Columbus and a 1,500-man crew returned to the Americas and demanded that the Taino Indians on Hispaniola bring them gold. They established a system of quotas, in which the Native Americans had to bring the Spanish certain amounts of gold. If they failed to meet the quota, the Spanish would cut off their hands or, in many cases, crucify them on hilltops.

Based on the passage, what was one reason that Columbus was motivated to find gold in the New World?

- A. because he had exaggerated the amount of gold he'd found and was worried the Spanish monarchs would be angry with him
- B. because he wanted to pay his 1,500-man crew
- ✓ C. because the Spanish monarchs promised him 10% of the gold and spices he found for them
- D. because he wanted to keep his new title of "Admiral of the Ocean Sea"

This passage states that the Spanish monarchs "promised [Columbus] 10% of all gold and spices that he found for them." So, the promise of this profit was one reason that Columbus was motivated to search for gold.

11. Historians' estimates of the size of the Native American population when Columbus arrived vary. Most estimate the total population of the Americas before Columbus to be around 50 million people. Some estimate that just 200 years later, the Native American population across the Americas dropped to 6 million.

Explorers' greed and the new arrivals' misplaced religious conviction led to millions of Native American deaths. Even more deadly were the diseases that Europeans brought to the Americas. Smallpox and other diseases would eventually claim tens of millions of Native Americans' lives.

The word genocide, the planned extermination of an ethnic group, is rarely used, probably because the killings were not methodical. The effect of the killings, however, was as devastating as a genocide.

Which statement would the author of this passage most likely agree with?



- A.** The word “genocide” should be used to describe the deaths of millions of Native American people at the hands of the Europeans.
- The author states that the word “genocide” is “rarely used” to describe the deaths of millions of Native Americans after contact with the Europeans but that “the effect of the killings...was as devastating as a genocide.” So, the author would likely agree with the statement that the word “genocide” should be used to describe the many deaths at the hands of the Europeans.*
- B.** Because they vary widely, historians' estimates of Native American populations should not be trusted.
- C.** European contact vastly improved the lives of most Native Americans.
- D.** Historians use the word "genocide" too much when writing about the past.