

On some people, the pustules appeared only far apart, and they did not suffer greatly, nor did many of them die of it. But many people's faces were spoiled by it, their faces and noses were made rough. Some lost an eye or were blinded.

This disease of pustules lasted a full sixty days; after sixty days it abated and ended. When people were convalescing and reviving, the pustules disease began to move in the direction of Chalco. And many were disabled or paralyzed by it, but they were not disabled forever. . . . The Mexica warriors were greatly weakened by it.

And when things were in this state, the Spaniards came [back], moving toward us. . . .

And all the common people suffered greatly. There was famine; many died of hunger. They no longer drank good, pure water, but the water they drank was salty. Many people died of it, and because of it many got dysentery and died. Everything was eaten: lizards, swallows, maize straw, grass that grows on salt flats. And they chewed at colorin wood, glue flowers, plaster, leather, and deer-skin, which they roasted, baked, and toasted so that they could eat them, and they ground up medicinal herbs and adobe bricks. There had never been the like of such suffering. The siege was frightening, and great numbers died of hunger. And bit by bit they came pressing us back against the wall, herding us together. . . .

And along every stretch [of road] the Spaniards took things from people by force. They were looking for gold; they cared nothing for green-stone, precious feathers, or turquoise. They looked everywhere with the women, on their abdomens, under their skirts. And they looked everywhere with the men, under their loincloths and in their mouths. And [the Spaniards] took, picked out the beautiful women, with yellow bodies. And how some women got loose was that they covered their faces with mud and put on ragged blouses and skirts, clothing themselves all in rags. And some men were picked out, those who were strong and in the prime of life, and those who were barely youths, to run errands for them and be their errand boys, called their [priests, acolytes]. Then they burned some of them on the mouth; some they branded on the cheeks, some on the mouth.

QUESTIONS FOR READING AND DISCUSSION

1. What did the Mexicans notice about the Spaniards on their entry into Tenochtitlán? How did their impressions of the Spaniards change, and what happened to change those impressions?
2. Why did Montezuma welcome Cortés, saying “you have come to sit on your seat of authority”?
3. What comparisons did the Mexicans make between themselves and the Spaniards? Did the Mexicans consider the Spaniards civilized? To what extent did the Mexicans perceive the Spaniards as the Spaniards perceived themselves? By what standards did the Mexicans judge the Spaniards?
4. Since this account was collected a generation after the Conquest, to what extent might post-Conquest Mexican experiences have shaped this narrative?

DOCUMENT 2–5

Sir Thomas More Describes New World Utopia

The surprising novelty of the New World caused many Europeans to imagine new possibilities, even new societies, on the shores of the western Atlantic. In 1515, Sir Thomas More, a prominent lawyer and member of Parliament, wrote Utopia, a book that became famous for its portrait of an imaginary New World society totally different from England and other European monarchies. In the following excerpt, More criticizes the harmful effects of property in England and describes the happy consequences of communal property in Utopia. More's account of the Utopians contrasts the unequal distribution of wealth in England with the promise of abundance and happiness in a New World commonwealth.

Utopia, 1515

Though to speak plainly my real sentiments, I must freely own that as long as there is any property, and while money is the standard of all other things, cannot think that a nation can be governed either justly or happily: not justly, because the best things will fall to the share of the worst men; nor happily, because all things will be divided among a few (and even these are not in all respects happy), the rest being left to be absolutely miserable. Therefore when I reflect on the wise and good constitution of the Utopians — among whom all things are so well governed, and with so few laws; where virtue hath its due reward, and yet there is such an equality, that every man lives in plenty — when I compare with them so many other nations that are still making new laws, and yet can never bring their constitution to a right regulation, where notwithstanding everyone has his property; yet all the laws that they can invent have not the power either to obtain or preserve it, or even to enable men certainly to distinguish what is their own from what is another's; . . . the setting all upon a level was the only way to make a nation happy, which cannot be obtained so long as there is property: for when every man draws to himself all that he can compass, by one title or another, it must needs follow, that how plentiful soever a nation may be, yet few dividing the wealth of it among themselves, the rest must fall into indigence. . . .

From whence I am persuaded, that till property is taken away there can be no equitable or just distribution of things, nor can the world be happily governed for as long as that is maintained, the greatest and the far best part of mankind will be still oppressed with a load of cares and anxieties. . . .

“[I]f you had been in Utopia with me, and had seen their laws and rules, as I did, for the space of five years, in which I lived among them; and during which time I was so delighted with them, that indeed I should never have left them, if I had not been to make the discovery of that new world to the Europeans; you would then confess that you had never seen a people so well constituted as they” . . .

Agriculture is that which is so universally understood among them that no person, either man or woman, is ignorant of it; they are instructed in it from their