The Maya are native peoples who live in parts of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Archaeologists divide the period before the Spanish conquest in the 1520s into several periods.

The Pre-Classic period began as early as 1800 BCE (Before Common Era). During this time, the Maya began to live in villages and cities, and around 300 BCE to develop a Maya writing system.

In the Classic period (250 CE to 900 CE) the Maya expanded their settlements into great cities with large temple complexes, which were controlled by kings. These cities such as Tikal, Chichen Itzá, and Palenque, were comparable to or larger in size than European cities of that time. The Maya developed a sophisticated writing system using glyphs, as well as a unique number system that used a combination of bars and dots to create large numbers. Maya mathematics included the concept of zero.

By around 900 CE, many Maya cities such as Tikal and Palenque had fallen into decline. The reason for this decline is not known; theories include disease, warfare, or climate change. The Spanish conquest in the early 16th century brought devastation and upheaval to the Maya people. As the Spanish crown established its own administration Maya people had to leave their homes and were relocated into newly founded Spanish cities. In the [1820s] Central American States like Guatemala gained independences from Spain.

While Maya civilization is often remembered for these Classic Era accomplishments, Maya culture did not end with the so-called collapse in 900 CE. Today there are over six million Maya people living throughout Central America-and many living as immigrants in the U.S.. Half the population of Guatemala [is] Maya. The Modern Maya show remarkable cultural resilience despite suffering from land equality and severe poverty. There are twenty-three Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala today, and the Maya maintain traditions of dress and religion that can be traced back to the peak of Classic Maya civilization.
1. What happened in the Pre-Classic period?
   A. The Maya began living in villages and cities.
   B. The Maya developed a number system that could express large numbers.
   C. The Maya left their homes and relocated into Spanish cities.
   D. The Maya made up half the population of Guatemala.

2. The text describes some Maya accomplishments in the Maya Classic period. What is one of those accomplishments?
   A. The Maya began living in villages and cities.
   B. The Maya developed a number system that could express large numbers.
   C. The Maya left their homes and relocated into Spanish cities.
   D. The Maya made up half the population of Guatemala.

3. Maya culture from the Classic period is still practiced today. What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?
   A. "The Maya are native peoples who live in parts of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador."
   B. "In the Classic period (250 CE to 900 CE) the Maya expanded their settlements into great cities with large temple complexes, which were controlled by kings."
   C. "In the [1820s] Central American States like Guatemala gained independences from Spain."
   D. "... the Maya maintain traditions of dress and religion that can be traced back to the peak of Classic Maya civilization."

4. Read this sentence from the text.
   "While Maya civilization is often remembered for these Classic Era accomplishments, Maya culture did not end with the so-called collapse in 900 CE. ... the Maya maintain traditions of dress and religion that can be traced back to the peak of Classic Maya civilization."
   Based on the text, what can you infer about the Maya Classic period?
   A. The Classic period defined Maya cultural identity.
   B. The Classic period is not important to Maya cultural identity.
   C. The Classic period was the longest period in Maya history.
   D. The Classic Period was the end of Maya cultural identity.

5. What is the main idea of the text?
   A. Maya history is divided into periods before the Spanish conquest, and the Maya people are spread out today.
   B. The Maya Classic period is the most important period of Maya history because of all the important accomplishments made in that time.
   C. The Maya culture formed long ago, and despite the fall of the Maya civilization, the culture continues today.
   D. The Spanish conquest was devastating to the Maya people, but places like Guatemala with a lot of Maya people gained independence from Spain.
Congress Speaks Spanish

Inside the halls of Congress, more and more lawmakers are speaking Spanish. Congress is the branch of government that makes the laws. Congress is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

"Many politicians are studying Spanish," says political expert Michael Shifter. Some lawmakers are taking Spanish classes and debating their positions in Spanish. Others hold bilingual press conferences in English and Spanish. Bilingual refers to being spoken or expressed in two languages. Some lawmakers of Hispanic origin also speak to each other in Spanish.

The increased interest in Spanish follows a sharp growth in the Hispanic population in the United States. Hispanics, also known as Latinos, make up one of the fastest-growing minority group in the country.

Hispanic Americans are people in the United States whose families come from Spanish-speaking countries. Most of those countries are located in Central and South America. The latest census, or population count, shows that more than 50 million people in the United States are Hispanic.

Check out these Spanish words that some lawmakers in Congress use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>law</td>
<td>ley</td>
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<tr>
<td>politician</td>
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<td>vote</td>
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<td>congress</td>
<td>congreso</td>
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<tr>
<td>senator</td>
<td>senador</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. According to the article, someone who is bilingual
   A. speaks two languages
   B. speaks only English
   C. speaks three languages
   D. speaks only Spanish

2. Hispanic Americans make up one of the fastest-growing minority groups in the country. Based on this passage, what effect might this growth be having on lawmakers?
   A. Members of Congress want to write laws in Spanish.
   B. More politicians are traveling to Spanish-speaking countries.
   C. Many politicians are teaching Spanish classes.
   D. Some lawmakers are learning Spanish.

3. After reading this passage, you can conclude that a census is
   A. the number of people who move to a new country
   B. a sharp growth in the population of an area
   C. the number of lawmakers who make up Congress
   D. an official count of people living in an area

4. Read the following sentence from the passage: "Some lawmakers are taking Spanish classes and debating their positions in Spanish."
   In this sentence, the word debating means
   A. memorizing
   B. writing
   C. arguing
   D. forgetting

5. Which statement best describes the central idea of this passage?
   A. Some lawmakers in Congress are speaking Spanish.
   B. More than 50 million people in the United States are Hispanic.
   C. Congress is the lawmaking branch of government.
   D. The Hispanic population in the United States is growing.

6. Review the Lawmaking Lingo box with this article. Which Spanish word would a lawmaker use when referring to a vote?

7. Why might the sharp growth in the Hispanic population influence politicians to learn Spanish?
1. Mexico is a country in North America. It is located south of the United States.
2. The full name of Mexico is Estados Unidos Mexicanos. This means the United States of Mexico.
3. Mexico has a political system similar to that of the United States.
4. Mexico has many mountains. This makes travel around Mexico difficult.
5. Mexico is about three times as big as the state of Texas.
6. Most people of Mexico have Native American and Spanish ancestors.
7. Most Mexicans speak Spanish.
8. More than eighty percent of Mexicans are Catholic.
9. The Rio Grande river forms most of the border between the United States and Mexico.
10. The population of Mexico is growing very fast.
11. Mexico City is the capital of Mexico. It is the largest city in North America.
12. About one-sixth of Mexico's population lives in Mexico City or close to it.
13. Mexico City is one of the most important locations of Mexico's industry
14. The Mexican monetary unit is called *peso.*
1. Which religion would you most likely identify with if you were Mexican?
   A. Islam
   B. Buddhism
   C. Catholicism
   D. Protestantism

2. When you pay for your lunch in a restaurant in Mexico, what is the name of the money you use?
   A. Pesos
   B. Dineros
   C. Dollars
   D. Meal Vouchers

3. What does it mean to "form a border" like the Rio Grande does?
   A. To create a wall around a country.
   B. To build a hotel for Americans to stay in when they visit.
   C. To use river water for growing crops when you farm.
   D. To be the line that separates two different places.

4. Why would most of the industry in Mexico be near the biggest city rather than out in the countryside?
   A. Industry means factories, and they don't take up much room.
   B. Industries need lots of people to work in them, and cities are where you find lots of people.
   C. The government wants most of the pollution to be near where most of the people live.
   D. The countryside is too beautiful to spoil with factories, so they aren't allowed out in the country.

5. The passage is mostly about
   A. Things you should be able to say in Spanish
   B. A test given about Mexico
   C. Important facts about Mexico
   D. A test given in Mexico

6. Why do you think the author chose to present this information in a list?

7. Why would the fact that Mexico has many mountains make it difficult to travel around the country?
Brazil Today - The Independence of Brazil

by ReadWorks

The events leading to Brazil's independence started in Europe. Emperor Napoleon of France invaded Portugal and Spain in 1807 and 1808. The Portuguese rulers fled from Lisbon, Portugal, to Brazil. Brazil was a Portuguese colony in the New World. The Spanish monarch was captured and temporarily imprisoned.

All of Spain's colonies in the New World were on their own. Though the colonies officially belonged to Spain, they did not want the king always looking over their shoulders and managing their affairs. The colonists wanted much more freedom from Spain. They began to see the imprisonment of their monarch as a chance to gain independence. Latin Americans started to rise up against the lingering signs of Spanish power. Spain was determined to hold on to its New World colonies. The two sides fought many bloody battles in Central and South America. Spain's colonies fought a long, hard war for independence.

In Brazil, it was different. The colony became independent more peacefully. Prince John VI, the future Portuguese monarch, escaped Napoleon and moved to Brazil. The colony became the seat of the grand Portuguese Empire that covered parts of Africa, India, and Brazil. The future king of Portugal stayed in Brazil for 13 years. He grew attached to Brazilians and the colony. Brazilians did not feel removed from the Portuguese government. Instead, they felt that the prince brought status and glory to their colony. Indeed, in 1815, John VI announced that Brazil would be a kingdom, on equal footing in the Portuguese Empire with the kingdom of Portugal itself.

John VI became king of Brazil, but he had to agree to rule from Portugal. John VI's form of government was a constitutional monarchy. The constitution protected the rights of the people, just as the U.S. Constitution protects U.S. citizens. But unlike the U.S., Brazil still had a monarch. When John VI sailed for Portugal, his 23-year-old son, Pedro, remained in Brazil.

In the meantime, the rest of Latin America was fighting bloody wars for independence. The territory once held by Spain split into many different groups. These groups fought each other. The map of South America used to be two big territories. It was divided between the colonies of Spain and the one colony of Portugal, Brazil. Today the many different countries on the South American map remind us of the divisions within Latin America. All of the different boundaries were established through wars for independence, except for the case of Brazil. Brazil stayed intact as one country, just as it had been one territory.

Pedro realized that Brazil's people wanted independence, although they were not yet revolting. But, the government in Portugal was worried that Pedro favored the Brazilians too much. Pedro's father ordered him to come back to Portugal. Instead, he disobeyed his father and remained in Brazil. He is supposed to have simply declared, "I remain!" After his decision to stay, Pedro announced that Brazil would be independent from Portugal. Today, Brazilians celebrate this moment in history with "I Remain Day," similar to our Fourth of July. Pedro's stance let Brazil gain freedom without fighting.
1. The Portuguese monarch fled to Brazil because
   A. he wanted to begin a new empire.
   B. Napoleon invaded Portugal.
   C. his father ordered him to.
   D. he wanted to discover the New World.

2. Why does the author describe Spanish colonies in Central and South America?
   A. to explain why Brazilians got the idea to battle for independence
   B. to illustrate how Brazil had a more violent fight for independence than other places did
   C. to show that Brazil had to become independent or else join the Spanish Empire
   D. to contrast their battles for independence with Brazil's independence

3. Based on the passage, which of these statements best explains why Pedro favored Brazilian independence?
   A. He had lived in Brazil for most of his life.
   B. He had heard that Spain's colonies were fighting bloody wars.
   C. The people were not yet revolting.
   D. His father had already returned to Portugal to be king.

4. Read the following sentences: "Pedro's father ordered him to come back to Portugal. Instead, he disobeyed his father and remained in Brazil."
   The word disobeyed means
   A. did not do as he was told
   B. learned a lesson from
   C. honored or cherished
   D. took him off the throne

5. What event does "I Remain Day" celebrate in Brazil, and why is it important?

6. Explain how Napoleon's invasions of Spain and Portugal helped lead to independence for Spanish colonies and the Portuguese colony of Brazil.

7. Vocabulary word: colony: distant territory belonging to or under the control of another nation.
   Use the vocabulary word in a sentence
Mexican Mole
by ReadWorks

Photo Credit: Alejandro Linares Garcia, CC BY-SA 3.0

Photograph of Mole Chicken

Have you have tried chocolate with meat? Mexico's national dish, a sauce called mole, is a combination of chiles, spices, and often times, a hint of chocolate. Mole (mo-LAY) is the general term for a sauce made of three essential ingredients: fruit, nut, and chili. Mole sauces vary greatly depending on the particular region of origin. For instance, mole negro, which is native to Oaxaca, is dark, thick, and chocolate-flavored, while the Puebla region's mole poblano is silky and fruity.

Many people debate where mole was first concocted. Different regions want the honor of having invented the original mole recipe. The most popular legend advertised by Puebla is that mole was concocted by nuns in a local Pueblan convent who, upon the impending arrival of a church leader, whipped up a sauce with the ingredients available in their kitchen. Another legend is that mole came from the Aztecs, who had served it to the Spanish conquistadors upon their arrival in Mexico.

There is no debate, however, about the tediousness of making mole. Not only are moles very time-consuming, they require up to thirty ingredients. Sometimes there are ten different kinds of chiles in just one mole recipe. Most cooks make mole in large batches for the sake of efficiency. Can you guess how many people the largest pot of mole served? 11, 000 people!
1. What is mole?
   A. a Mexican sauce made of meat, vegetables, and often times, a hint of chocolate
   B. a Mexican sauce made of chiles, spices, and often times, a hint of chocolate
   C. a Mexican sauce made of wine, spices, and often times, a hint of candy
   D. a Mexican sauce made of tomatoes, spices, and often times, a hint of garlic

2. What does the text describe?
   A. different regions of Mexico
   B. the exact steps taken to make mole
   C. different dishes made throughout Mexico
   D. different legends about where mole was first made

3. Making mole can be very tedious. What information from the text best supports this statement?
   A. Moles can be time-consuming to make and may require up to 30 ingredients.
   B. Mole sauces vary greatly depending on the particular region of origin.
   C. Different regions want the honor of having invented the original mole recipe.
   D. Some believe that mole came from the Aztecs, who had served it to the Spanish conquistadors upon their arrival in Mexico.

4. What can be concluded about the taste of mole from different regions of Mexico?
   A. It can be very different.
   B. It is usually very similar.
   C. It is always very sour.
   D. It is very salty.

5. What is the main idea of this text?
   A. Oaxaca’s mole is dark, thick, and chocolate-flavored, while the Puebla region’s mole is silky and fruity.
   B. Many people debate where mole was first concocted as different regions want the honor of having invented the original mole recipe.
   C. Mole, Mexico’s national dish, is made very differently across various regions in Mexico.
   D. Moles very time-consuming and may require up to thirty ingredients to make.
Imagine a city built on steep hillsides. The houses and buildings are all bright colors. Stairways and special elevators take people up and down the hilly city. There is artwork everywhere.

This city is real, and it's in Chile! The city is called Valparaíso. It is on the west coast of Chile, by the ocean. Valparaíso was a seaport city. Ships would go there to trade goods. The ships also brought many different people to the city. So the city's personality has been shaped by diversity.

The city's personality is easy to see in the buildings. The lower part of the city has parks, theaters, and government buildings. It also has churches and a cathedral. Some of the buildings here show the influence of Spanish settlers, and of people who came for trade.

Up in the hills, there are homes and apartments. These buildings are very colorful. On just one block, you may see a yellow building, then a blue one, then a pink one. You may also see some interesting artwork. One part of the city is called "El Museo a Cielo Abierto." That means "The Open-Air Museum." If you walk around this part of the city, you can see lots of beautiful murals. People have painted pictures on walls. They've painted pictures on the steps leading up the hills. They've even painted some of the fire hydrants. It's like being in a very special museum!
1. Where is the city of Valparaiso?
   A. in the country of Argentina  
   B. in the country of Chile  
   C. in the country of Brazil

2. The text lists different things you can find in Valparaiso. What is one of these things?
   A. tall mountains with thick, green forests  
   B. brightly colored houses and buildings on steep hillsides  
   C. flat streets with old buildings painted white

3. Read the following sentences:

   "The city's personality is easy to see in the buildings. The lower part of the city has parks, theaters, and government buildings. It also has churches and a cathedral. Some of the buildings here show the influence of Spanish settlers, and of people who came for trade."

   Based on this information, who has influenced Valparaiso?
   A. different kinds of people, including people from other parts of the world  
   B. only people whose families have lived in Valparaiso for hundreds of years  
   C. people who love to paint beautiful murals on buildings

4. Which paragraph in the text explains how art is a key part of Valparaiso?
   A. the first paragraph  
   B. the second paragraph  
   C. the last paragraph

5. What is the main idea of the text?
   A. Valparaiso is a city in Chile that has stairways and special elevators that take people up and down the hilly city.  
   B. Valparaiso was a seaport city where ships would go to trade goods, bringing many different people to the city.  
   C. Valparaiso is a city in Chile that has colorful buildings on steep hillsides, artwork, and a history of diverse people.