Mexica (Aztec) Society: 1325-1519
- 1325: Mexica people arrived from the north, settled on Tenochtitlan
- 1326: For 100 years they were subject to the Tepanecs of Azcapotzalco
- 1426: War broke out between the Tepanecs and the Mexicans
- 1430: Mexica won complete independence
- 1426-40: Itzcoatl ruled Mexica people, initiated era of changes and conquests.
- 1440-69: Moctezuma Iihuatcamina ("the Elder") consolidated power of the Mexica
- 4 rulers [Axayacatl (1469-81), Tizoc (1481-5), Ahuitzotl (1486-1502) and Motecucloma] continued to extend Aztec rule through military or economic
  subjugation

Mexica Social Organization:
- pipiltin: - headed by upper nobility or tlato nan pipiltin, who in turn chose huey tlatoani
  - controlled education, paid no tribute, filled important admin. positions
  - warriors and some administrators were allowed to enter the nobility
- macehualtin: - worked the land and lived in communities called calpulli
  - urban dwellers, however, also worked as artisans, artists and merchants and took advantage
  of the social mobility made possible by the importance of trade in the growing economy

Tenochtitlan:
- center of a large, complex political and socio-economic conglomerate
  - subjected groups paid tribute, "protected" commercial routes, supplied human sacrifices,
    were forced to speak Nahuatl when in Tenochtitlan; those who resisted were forced to fight
    the ritual "Flower Wars" to supply victims for sacrifice

Hernan Cortés: birth to 1520
- Early life: - born in 1484 (?) in Extremadura
  - father, Martín Cortés de Monroy, was an hidalgo, or a petty nobleman and a
- Education: - extent of his education is a point for
  - may have attended the University of Salamanca at the age of 14, and received a degree in
    Law and a rudimentary knowledge of Latin
  - best way for an hidalgo to improve his lot in Spanish society during the early 1500's was as a
    soldier

- 1504: Cortés set sail for the West Indies, landing in Hispaniola and worked as a notary for 5 or 6 years.
- 1511: Fought under Diego Velázquez in the conquest of Cuba and Velázquez became governor of Cuba;
  Cortés became his secretary

- 1514: Cortés married Catalina Suárez Marcaida and moved to the town of Baracoa
- Nov. 1518: Asked by Velázquez to lead an exploratory expedition to the Mexican mainland (Yucatán);
  instructed by Velázquez to
    1) look for the fleet of a previous expedition
    2) to rescue any Christian captives and
    3) to explore and trade.
  Velázquez did not, however, give Cortés permission to conquer or settle.

- Spring 1519: Without giving prior notice, Cortés set sail for Yucatán
- Apr. 22, 1519: Expedition reached the Yucatán.
- October 1520: Cortés wrote his "Second Letter from Mexico," on the eve of his second advance
  into the city of Texcuitlan, or Tenochtitlan.

Diego Velázquez' expeditions to the mainland
- 1517: The first expedition to Yucatán, led by of Hernández de Cordoba.
- 1518: The second expedition, led by Juan de Grijalva.
- 1519: The third expedition, led by Cortés

Transition in Spain
- 1504: Queen Isabella died.
- 1516: Kind Ferdinand died.
- 1517: Charles V, grandson of Isabella and Ferdinand, arrived from Flanders to claim his
  Spanish inheritance. This transition of power resulted in an upheaval in the Spanish court, a purge of
  officials who had previously governed Spain and the Indies, and a return to favor of many others,
  including a close ally of Velázquez, Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, the bishop of Burgos, his wife's
  uncle.