A SHORT HISTORY OF MEXICO CITY



Although the central region of Mexico's high plateau has been inhabited for at least 20,000 years, Mexico City only dates back to the 14th century. The Aztecs, or Mexica, had reached this area in the previous century, eventually settling on an island in Lake Texcoco. Here, in 1325, the city of Tenochtitlán began to take shape.

The lake was shallow, and during the nearly 200 years until 1519, the Aztecs expanded the inhabited area by land refill and the creation of artificial islands. Canals were dug for the transportation of goods and people. Aqueducts were constructed to bring drinking water from natural springs outside the city, dams to protect it against floods, and causeways and bridges to
connect the city with the shore. There were many houses, palaces, temples, squares, markets and even a zoo. Perhaps the most striking construction of this period is the Templo Mayor, a double pyramid which still survives. As the capital of an empire stretching from Texas to Honduras, Tenochtitlán was a magnificent and important city.

When the Spanish arrived, they called it the 'Venice of the New World'.
The Spanish began their conquest of Mexico in 1519 and came close to Tenochtitlán the same year. In 1521, they took control of it, after fierce fighting that destroyed most of the city. A new capital, with a new name, was built on the ruins, using Spanish architectural styles. One part of the lake was filled in to join the island to the shore, and Mexico City became the capital of the wealthiest colony in the Americas, the centre of trade between Spain and China.

By the beginning of the 17th century, it was a busy, lively city, with some residents leading a splendid and luxurious way of life. Not everything went well, though: heavy rain in 1629 caused a great deal of destruction, in which many people died, and thousands lost their homes. A large part of the city had to be rebuilt. For much of the century, the residents suffered from social and economic pressures, including serious food shortages, which erupted in riots in 1692.
In the 18th century, too, many new buildings were constructed. It was a prosperous period, when the new aristocracy paid for splendid buildings, banquets and balls, not to mention the latest fashions from Europe.

The rise of Napoleon in the early 19th century led to political changes throughout Europe. An uprising took place in Mexico in 1810, with the aim of ending rule from Spain. This goal was finally achieved in 1821, when Mexico City briefly became the capital of the Mexican Empire. Since 1823, it has been the capital of the Republic of Mexico, apart from a short period, from 1863 to 1867, when the country was again an empire.

In the first few decades of the 20th century, plans were drawn up for the urbanisation of Mexico City; slum-clearance and housing development programmes were introduced, and factories spread through the city. During the 20th century, the population grew fast, and the city is now one of the largest in the world. It has changed a great deal since it was founded nearly 700 years ago



LIVEWORKSHEETS



Questions 1-10

Do the following statements agree with the information in the reading passage? Write

TRUE *if the statement agrees with the information*

FALSE *if the statement contradicts the information*

NOT GIVEN *if there is no information on this*

1. Mexico City and the central region of the high plateau have been inhabited for the same length of time.
2. The Aztecs generally preferred to live on islands.
3. The area where people lived was artificially increased between 1325 and 1519.
4. The Spanish had heard of Tenochtitlán before they reached Mexico.
5. The Aztec inhabitants of Tenochtitlán left when the city was conquered.
6. Rain destroyed the whole of Mexico City in 1629.
7. In the 18th century, some residents of Mexico City bought European goods.
8. Spanish rule of Mexico ended in 1810.
9. Since 1823, Mexico has always been a republic.
10. Industrialization of Mexico City took place in the early part of the 20th century



LIVEWORKSHEETS

CAVES

Caves are natural underground spaces commonly those into which man can enter. There are three major types: the most widespread and extensive are those developed in soluble rocks, usually limestone or marble, by underground movement of water; on the coast are those formed in cliffs generally by the concentrated pounding of waves along joints and zones of crushed rock; and a few caves are formed in lava flows, where the solidified outer crust is left after the molten core has drained away to form rough tunnels, like those on the small basalt volcanoes of Auckland.

Limestone of all ages, ranging from geologically recent times to more than 450 million years ago, is found in many parts of New Zealand, although it is not all cavernous. Many caves have been discovered, but hundreds still remain to be explored. The most notable limestone areas for caves are the many hundreds of square kilometres of Te Kuiti Group (Oligocene) rocks from Port Waikato south to Mokau and from the coast inland to the Waipa Valley – especially in the Waitomo district; and the Mount Arthur Marble (Upper Ordovician) of the mountains of northwest Nelson (fringed by thin bands of Oligocene limestone in the valleys and near the coast).

Sedimentary rocks (including limestone) are usually laid down in almost horizontal layers or beds which may be of any thickness, but most commonly of 5-7.5 cm. Thesebedsmay accumulate to a total thickness of about a hundred meters. Pure limestone is brittle, and folding due to earth movements causes cracks along the partings, and joints at angles to them. Rainwater percolates down through the soil and the fractures in the underlying rocks to the water table, below which all cavities and pores are filled with water. This water, which is usually acidic, dissolves the limestone along the joints and, once a passage is opened, it is enlarged by the abrasive action of sand and pebbles carried by streams. The extensive solution takes place between the seasonal limits of the water table. Erosion may continue to cut down into the floor, or silt and pebbles may build up floors and divert stream courses. Most caves still carry the stream that formed them.

The unique beauty of caves lies in the variety of mineral encrustations which are found sometimes completely covering walls, ceiling, and floor. Stalactites (Gk. stalaktos, dripping) are pendent growths of crystalline calcium carbonate (calcite) formed from solution by the deposition of minute quantities of calcite from percolating groundwater. They are usually white to yellow in color, but occasionally are brown or red. Where water evaporates faster than it drips, long thin straws are formed which may reach the floor or thicken into columns. If the source of water moves across the ceiling, a thin drape, very like a stage curtain, is formed. Helictites are stalactites that branch or curl. Stalagmites (Gk. stalagmites, that which dripped) are conical or gnarled floor growths formed by splashing if the water drips faster than it evaporates. These may grow toward the ceiling to form columns of massive proportions. Where calcite is deposited by water spreading thinly over the walls or floor, flowstone is formed and pools of water may build up their edges to form narrow walls of brimstone. Gypsum (calcium sulfate) is a white cave deposit of many crystal habits which are probably dependent on humidity. The most beautiful form is the gypsum flower which extrudes from a point on the cave wall in curling and diverging bundles of fibers like a lily or orchid.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Questions 1-3

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Complete the summary.

Choose ONE WORD ONLY from the passage for each answer.

There are several 1.....of caves with the most common and largest being located in limestone or marble. Coastal caves are created in cliffs usually by waves. In lava flows, the solidified outer crusts that remain once the molten core has drained away also form 2.....Limestone is to be found all over New Zealand, but not all of it contains caves. While many caves are known, there are large numbers that have yet to be uncovered. The main 3.....for limestone caves are Te Kuiti Group rocks.

Questions 11-13

Do the following statements agree with the information in Reading Passage I? Write

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information about the statement

11. The limestone found in New Zealand is more than 450 million years old.
12. Stalactites are more often white to yellow than brown or red.
13. Stalagmites never grow very large.

LIVEWORKSHEETS