**Reading Comprehension**

**Directions** Read the following selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

*In the early sixteenth century, Spanish soldier Bernal Díaz del Castillo took part in expeditions to Mexico. Decades later, he recorded his experiences and interactions with the Aztecs, native Mexicans, in* The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*.*

**from The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico**

**Bernal Díaz del Castillo**

As we came nearer in we saw the water breaking over the bar at the mouth of the

river, so we got out boats, and by sounding[[1]](#footnote-1) we found out that the two larger vessels

could not enter the river, so it was agreed that they should anchor outside in the sea, and

that all the soldiers should go up the river in the other two vessels which drew less water

and in the boats.

When we arrived within a half a league of the town we could hear the sound of chopping

wood for the Indians were making barriers and stockades and getting ready to give us battle.

When we were aware of this, so as to make certain, we disembarked half a league from the

town on a point of land where some palm trees were growing. When the

**10** Indians saw us there a fleet of fifty canoes approached us full of warriors. Many other

canoes full of warriors were lying in the creeks, and they kept a little way off as though

they did not dare approach as did the first fleet. When we perceived their intentions we

were on the point of firing at them, but it pleased God that we agreed to call out to them,

and through Julianillo and Melchorejo, who spoke their language very well, we told

them that they need have no fear, that we wished to talk to them, for we had things to tell

them which when they understood them they would be glad that we had come to their

country and their homes. Moreover, we wished to give them some of the things we had

brought with us. As they understood what was said to them, four of the canoes came

near with about thirty Indians in them, and we showed them strings of green beads and

**20** small mirrors and blue cut glass beads, and as soon as they saw them they assumed a

more friendly manner, for they thought that they were chalchihuites[[2]](#footnote-2) which they value

greatly.

Then through Julianillo and Melchorejo as interpreters, the Captain told them that we

came from a distant country and were the vassals of a great Emperor named Don

Carlos[[3]](#footnote-3), who had many great lords and chiefs as his vassals, and that they ought to

acknowledge him as their lord, and it would be to their advantage to do so, and that in

return for the beads they might bring us some food and poultry.

Two of the Indians answered us, and said that they would bring us the food which

we asked for, and would barter their things for ours; but as for the rest, they already had

**30** a chief, that we were only just now arrived and knew nothing about them, and yet we

wanted to give them a chief. Let us beware not to make war on them as we had done at

Champoton, for they had more than three jiquipiles[[4]](#footnote-4) of warriors from all the provinces

around in readiness and they said that they

were well aware that only a few days earlier we had killed and wounded more than two

hundred men at Champoton but that they were not weaklings such as those, and for this

reason they had come to talk to us and find out what we wanted, and that whatever we

should tell them they would go and report to the chiefs of many towns who had

assembled to decide on peace or war.

Then our Captain embraced the Indians as a sign of peace, and gave them some

**40** strings of beads and told them to go and bring back an answer as soon as possible, but

he said that although we did not wish to anger them, that if they did not return we should

have to force our way into their town.

The following day more than thirty Indians with their chief came to the promontory

under the palm trees where we were camped and brought roasted fish and fowls, and

zapote fruit and maize bread, and braziers with live coals and incense, and they fumigated

us all. Then they spread on the ground some mats, which here they call petates, and over

them a cloth, and they presented some golden jewels, some were diadems, and others were

in the shape of ducks, like those in Castile, and other jewels like lizards and three

necklaces of hollow beads, and other articles of gold but not of

**50** much value, for they were not worth more than two hundred dollars. They also brought

some cloaks and skirts, such as they wear, and said that we must accept these things in good

part as they had no more gold to give us, but that farther on, in the direction of the sunset,

there was plenty of gold, and they said "Colua, Colua, Méjico, Méjico," but we did not know

what this Colua or Méjico could be. Although the present that they brought

us was not worth much, we were satisfied, because we thus knew for certain that they

possessed gold. Captain Juan de Grijalva thanked them for their gift and gave them a

present of beads. It was decided that we should go on board at once, for the two ships

were in much danger should a northerly gale blow, for it would put them on a lee shore, and

moreover we wanted to get nearer to where we were told there was gold.

**60** We returned on board and set our course along the coast and in two days came in

sight of a town called Ayagualulco, and many of the Indians from that town marched

along the shore with shields made of the shells of turtle, which sparkled as the sun shone on

them, and some of our soldiers contended that they were made of low grade gold.

The Indians who carried them as they marched along the sandy beach, knowing that

they were at a safe distance, cut capers, as though mocking the ships. We gave the town

the name of La Rambla, and it is thus marked on the charts.

Coasting along we came in sight of a bay into which flows the river Tonalá.

As we sailed along we noted the position of the great river Coatzacoalcos. Soon we

came in sight of the great snow mountains, which have snow on them all the year round,

**70** and we saw other mountains, nearer to the sea.

As we followed along the coast, the Captain Pedro de Alvarado, went ahead with his

ship and entered a river which the Indians call Papaloapan, and which we then called the

Rio de Alvarado because Alvarado was the first to enter it. There, some Indian

fishermen, natives of a town called Tlacotalpa gave him some fish. We waited at the

mouth of the river with the other three ships until Alvarado came out, and the General

was very angry with him for going up the river without his permission, and ordered him

never to go ahead of the other ships again, lest an accident should happen when we could

not give him help.

1. This narrative is a primary source because it is a

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| a. | participant's report |
| b. | personal interview |
| c. | published document |
| d. | private letter |

2. Which descriptive details justify the historical context of this account?

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| --- | --- |
| a. | boats, beaded jewelry, skirts |
| b. | river, mountains, sea, land |
| c. | poultry, ducks, lizards, fish |
| d. | barriers, stockades, canoes, gold |

3. Which statement best summarizes lines 12-17?

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| --- | --- |
| a. | The Spaniards approached the Indians in peace, but when they arrived the Indians were ready for battle. |
| b. | The Indians began firing at the Spaniards, who were surprised because they expected a peaceful greeting. |
| c. | The Spaniards nearly shot at the Indians, but as the Indians approached, the Spaniards called out that they had come in peace. |
| d. | The Indians intended to act peacefully; but when the Spaniards arrived, the Indians began firing from their canoes. |

4. What inference can you make about the cultural characteristics of the Spaniards from the phrase "it pleased God" in line 13?

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| --- | --- |
| a. | rituals of daily sacrifice |
| b. | colonization as a divine obligation |
| c. | victory as a sacred object |
| d. | influence of religion on everyday life |

5. What can you infer from lines 23-27 about the historical context in which the work was written?

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| --- | --- |
| a. | Spanish explorers spread democracy. |
| b. | Indians rarely trusted interpreters. |
| c. | Spain was ruled by an Emperor. |
| d. | Don Carlos was a great vassal. |

6. The sentence in lines 39-42 reveals which cultural characteristic of the Spanish colonists?

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| --- | --- |
| a. | They believed strongly in making the Indians subjects of the Spanish emperor. |
| b. | The Spaniards lived by a strict code of conduct that did not permit violence. |
| c. | They frequently gave Indians lavish gifts in order to promote peace and cooperation. |
| d. | The Spaniards were interested in adopting various elements from other cultures. |

7. The author's perspective in lines 64-66 helps express the idea that

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| --- | --- |
| a. | Spaniards care little about mapping the Indians' territory |
| b. | Indians do not seem to respect the Spaniards |
| c. | Spaniards are jealous of the Indians shields |
| d. | Indians fear the intrusion of the Spaniards in their town |

8. Which words best describe the writer’s overall tone, or attitude, toward the Indians?

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| a. | Condescending and haughty |
| b. | Humble and modest |
| c. | Spiteful and mean |
| d. | Admiring and favorable |

9. What is the meaning of the word *vassals* as it appears in lines 24 and 25 of *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico?*

a. Enemy

b. Associate

c. Servant

d. Friend

10. Why did the men decide to anchor the larger vessels outside in the sea?

a. The vessels were too large to fit in the river.

b. The water in the river was too shallow.

c. The waves at the mouth of the river were too violent.

d. Not all of the soldiers wanted to go up the river.

**Short Answer**

11. Paraphrase the lines 43 through 46 from *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*.

“The following day more than thirty Indians with their chief came to the promontory under the palm trees where we camped and brought roasted fish and fowls, and zapote fruit and maize bread, and braziers with live coals and incense, and they fumigated us all.”

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| (2) | (1) | (0) |
| Student has included all elements of paraphrasing. | Student is missing some elements of paraphrasing but not key elements. | Student is missing key elements of paraphrasing. |

**Extended Response**

**Directions** Answer the following question. Write two or more paragraphs.

12. Based on your reading of this primary source, who was Bernal Díaz del Castillo's intended audience, and what was his purpose for writing? Support your response with details from the excerpt.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| (3) | (2) | (1) | (0) |
| Student accurately explains the audience and argues a response to the specific question using written and implied information from the text as support for the response. Student spells out connections and extends understanding beyond what is there on the page. | Student responds with general details from the text only showing a basic understanding of the text and/or the questions. Student may not fully or clearly connect the supporting details to the response. | Student responds with unclear, few or no details from the text. Student may not explain how the details support the response because they have listed the examples. Student did not answer both questions. Minor misunderstandings of the text and/or question are evident. | Student’s response is off-topic or the question is left blank. Off-topic includes major misunderstandings of the text. |

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| Question | Skill (GLE) | Answer (points) |
| 1. | Primary source (3.3a2) | A |
| 2. | historical context (4.4b) | D |
| 3 | Summary/restating (2.4d) | C |
| 4 | historical context (4.4b) | D |
| 5 | historical context (4.4b) | B |
| 6 | historical context (4.4b) | A |
| 7 | Author’s perspective(2.4f) | B |
| 8 | Tone (2.4c) | A |
| 9 | Archaic language/footnotes(2.2a) | C |
| 10 | Archaic language/footnotes(4.2a) | B |
| 11 | Retelling/restating (2.4d) | Drop Down Box of: 0, 1, and 2 |
| 12 | Primary source (3.3a2) | Drop Down Box of: 0, 1, 2, and 3 |
|  |  |  |

**Unit Reading Comprehension/ Skills Assessment**

**Answer Section**

11. Key elements of a paraphrase include:

Students’ own words

Maintain original idea

Does not summarize main idea

Is a detailed restatement

**ESSAY** 12. ANS:

Responses will vary. Students may suggest that the author was writing either to future generations of Spaniards or to contemporary European colonizers and that he was writing to glorify Spain's mission to colonize Mexico. Students may support their responses

with at least two of the following details:

a. The author writes that the Indians were "making barriers and stockades and getting ready to give us battle" (lines 7-8) a description that portrays the Indians as savage and confrontational. This description suggests that the author was writing to future generations of Spaniards or to contemporary European colonizers.

b. The author writes, "we were on the point of firing at them, but it pleased God that we agreed to call out to them" (line 13) The reference to God suggests that the author was writing to contemporary European colonizers, and his portrayal of the Spaniards as merciful suggests that his purpose is to glorify Spain's conquest of Mexico.

c. The Spanish interpreters told the Indians "we had things to tell them which when they understood them they would be glad that we had come to their country and their homes" (lines 15-17) This detail suggests that the author's purpose was to glorify Spain's conquest of Mexico.

d. The author explains that the Spaniards told the Indians about the "great Emperor named Don Carlos" and that the Spaniards also stressed that the Indians "ought to acknowledge him as their lord" (lines 24-26) This description suggests that the author was writing to future Spanish generations and that his purpose was to glorify Spain's conquest of Mexico.

e. The author notes, "We gave the town the name of La Rambla, and it is thus marked on the charts" (lines 65-66) The process of naming Indian towns with Spanish words suggests that the author was writing to future Spanish generations and that his purpose was to glorify Spain's conquest of Mexico.

1. Sounding: Measuring the depth of water [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Chalchihuite is jadeite, which the Indians treasured as a precious stone. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Emperor Don Carlos: King Charles I of Spain, also known as Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Ruled from 1516 to 1556. He inherited a Spanish and Habsburg empire extending across Europe from Spain and the Netherlands to Austria and the Kingdom of Naples and reaching overseas to Spanish America. (From *Britannica* online) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Every jiquipil numbers eight thousand men [↑](#footnote-ref-4)