The Mexican Revolution Study Guide

Historical Background

1. 1910-1920s
   The main problems Mexico faced:
   1. the stability of the government
      - Antonio Lopez Santa Ana was president 11 times from 1836-1855
      - Benito Juarez served 5 terms as president
      - Civil unrest between liberals and conservatives
      - Liberales- mostly peasants and lower class wanted change and reform such as land reform, equality, more rights
         - Peasant risings and strikes from PLM (Partido Liberal Mexicano/Mexican Liberal Party)
      - Conservadores- large land owners and most of the upper class, wanted to keep the government the same because they were benefiting through the corruption
   2. the power of the church
      - Held most of land
      - Influenced government by bribing with officials
   3. foreign domination of economy
      - Diaz relied heavily on import substitution or foreign development of natural resources
      - foreign capitalists owned mines
         - "The Mexican Revolution, Then and Now" by Daniel Cosio Villegas
   4. large gap between rich and poor
   5. concentration of land ownership
      - 90% of all land in Mexico was owned by about 17 people
   6. Porfirio Diaz ruled Mexico like a dictator
      - Imposed a conservative, centralized government revealing repressive qualities
      - Controlled fraudulent elections
      - Favored large landowners

Significant Events

1. 1911- Francisco Madero successfully outst hands Diaz from power
   - Gained support from people with the Plan de San Luis Potosi
   - Denounces the election of 1910 and announces Madero as provisional leader
   - Calls people to revolt
   - Fails at creating democracy because Neglects land reform
   - Emiliano Zapata- leader of the Zapatistas and commander of the Liberation army of the South
     - Accuses Madero of betraying the Revolution
     - Lays out his program in the “Plan de Ayala”
       - Denounces Madero as leader because of his betrayal of revolutionary ideas and set out goals for land reform
2. 1912- Pancho Villa- Mexican Revolutionary leader, commander of the Division del Norte (Division of the North)
   - Villa fights with Orozco’s rebels in the North
   - Joins forces with Huerta
3. 1913- Victoriano Huerta assumes power
   - Huerta betrays and kills Madero
The Constitutionalists, Zapatistas, and Poncho Villa fight against him due to his dictator-like rule
Huerta resigns in 1914 due to pressure and the release of the “Ley Juárez” which declared Huerta a traitor

1914- Venustiano Carranza takes control of Mexico
- Liberal leader
- Creates the current Constitution, The Constitution of 1917:
  - Limits the power of the church by making marriage a civil ceremony, religious organizations no longer had a legal status
  - Free education
  - All land seized from by Díaz would be restored, and declared the government as the original landowners
  - Declared labor laws

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1920- Alvaro Obregon overthrows Carranza
- Brings order and stability to Mexico under new constitution

1924- Plutarco Elias Calles replaces Obregon
- Founded the PNR (Partido Nacional Revolucionario/ National Revolutionary Party)

1934- Lazaro Cardena becomes president
*Problems in Mexico are subdued with the constitution of 1917, but ultimately they continue throughout the twentieth century
- Read “Twenty Years Later” –Jesus Silva Herzog

Sources to cite

- **The Constitution of 1917 (excerpts)** (primary)
  - Concentrated on the establishment of labor laws
    - Minimum wage, maximum work hours, justification of employee dismissal, child labor laws
- **Francisco Madero, The Plan of San Luis Potosi, 1910 (excerpts)** (primary)
  - Marks the beginning of the Mexican Revolution
  - Porfirio Díaz had Madero arrested
  - Madero took refuge in San Antonio
    - The Plan of San Luis Potosi was issued in order for Mexicans to rise up against the government and for the elections to be nullified.
- **Emiliano Zapata, The Plan de Ayala, 1911 (excerpts)** (primary)
  - An issue of revolt against Madero for not including land reform in his plans
  - Plan fights for Land and Liberty
  - Wanted to take back land from the haciendas and give it back to the peasants
  - Apply law so that those who do not obey the rules of land division are punished
- **Nathan Whetten, Rural Mexico, 1948 (excerpts)** (secondary)
  - President Cardenas’ most important achievement was land reform
  - Gave land back to the civilians
  - The great monopoly had been broken under Cardenas’ rule
  - Land was still scarce and many people still lived in poverty
  - Mexico still struggled with agriculture- even though it was better than Díaz’ time
- **Lazaro Cardenas, Speech, 1938 (excerpts)** (primary)
  - Written on March 18, 1938
    - Many Mexicans celebrated their declaration of economic independence when the President announced that the properties of the oil companies had been expropriate in the public interest.
- **Jesus Silva Herzog, The Balance Sheet of the Revolution, 1946 (excerpts)** (Secondary)
  - Jesús Silva Herzog was a Mexican economist and government official during the Mexican Revolution. In this overview of the revolution, he summarizes positive and negative outcomes that the Revolution had on Mexican citizens
Jesus Silva Herzog, *Twenty Years Later, 1964* (excerpts) (secondary)
- Silva notices that twenty years into the Revolution, most people are still living in poverty
  - Citizens of Mexico still suffer from hunger, have poor living conditions, are very ill, etc.
  - Small advances made in health care for SOME citizens
  - He states that he is tired of waiting around for big changes to be made

Jose E. Iturriaga, “Mexico’s Historical Crisis.” 1947 (excerpts) (secondary)
- states that little has changed after the Revolution
  - only small achievements made
- He asks: Are the Mexican Revolution’s goals dead?

Daniel Cosio Villegas, "The Mexican Revolution, Then and Now" (excerpts) (secondary)
- He argues that the revolution did nothing to help the people
  - Revolution is indeed dead
  - purpose of Revolution was lost
  - revolutionaries corrupt

**Paper Three Questions for the Mexican Revolution**

1. Examine the major stages of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and explain the programs of three of the most important leaders.

2. What were the results of the Mexican Revolution?

3. “The Revolution that began New Mexico in 1910 was the point genuine of the many Latin American revolutions up to that main point. To what extent do you support this statement?

4. What were the economic problems, which caused the Mexican Revolution, and to what extent were they solved by the Constitution of 1917?

5. Evaluate the extent to which the leaders of the Mexican Revolution could be considered as either “revolutionaries” or “reformers.”

6. "The Mexican revolution of the early twentieth century was not one but two revolutions, led by the reformers and the other by Revolutionaries." To what extent do your agree with this view.

7. “By the end of the 1920s the original objectives of the Mexican Revolution had been abandoned." To what extent do you agree with this judgment?

8. How successful were both moderates and radicals in achieving their aims in the Mexican Revolution by the end of the 1920s?

9. What were the political causes of the Mexican Revolution of 1910?

10. Who deserves the title "Father of the Mexican Revolution" and why?

**Study Tips for the Mexican Revolution**

1. Study how Santa Ana played an important role in the development of the Mexican Revolution

2. Study the reign of Porfirio Diaz in depth.

3. For each leader study their goals for the revolution, their role in the revolution, and the contributions they made to Mexico.

4. Study the political, economic, and social history of Mexico prior to 1910.
5. Study the idea of land ownership in Mexico prior, during, and post the Mexican Revolution.

6. Study America’s role in the Mexican Revolution.

7. Study the Liberal Plan and Plan de San Luis Potosí and describe how they both contributed towards the Mexican Revolution.

8. Study the main sources that contribute to better understand of the Mexican Revolution.

9. Study the successes and failures of the Constitution of 1917.

10. Study the achievements and failures of the Mexican Revolution as a whole.