## Life on the Hacienda Name:

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| **Intro:** after the initial conquest of the Americas, most of the Caribbean and Central America were turned into a system of lords and slaves known as the Hacienda system. A Hacienda was a grant of land to a person by the Spanish government. That person would then act essentially as the lord of that land, having broad powers to do whatever they wanted as long as they gave some of the money back to the Spanish crown.  But it is important that the British and French empires copied this exact system in their own empires. Both were eager to point out how cruel Spain was to its people but neither the British nor French reformed their own twisted systems. | **What is a Hacienda?**  **Why is it important to remember that the British and French also used this system?** |
| **Cruelty:** the hacienda system was noted for its extreme cruelty to those who worked there. Nowhere in the world was slavery ever as bad as it was in the Caribbean from 1500-1800. Those haciendas were such effective engines of human slaughter that 10s of thousands had to be kidnapped fresh every year just to replace those who had died at work. | **What was so bad about the haciendas?** |
| **Background** | |
| **The Conquistadors:** Spanish armies did not conquer the Americas. It was Spanish mercenaries, the Conquistadors, who conquered the Americas—men who made their livelihood killing for money. Many had grown up in the Reconquista, when Spain had fought a religious war against its Muslim population. Many had helped Spain expel its own Jewish population, as 300,000 Jews were forced to either leave or convert with threats (and often acts) of violence.  It is important to note two things about the Conquistadors due to their background: 1) they were perfectly willing to kill in the pursuit of wealth and 2) they felt it was justified to kill Non-Christians. | **Who were the Conquistadors?**  **What are 2 events the conquistadors may have helped with?**  **What are the problems with their background?** |
| **Administration and Pay:** After the first conquests, Spain suddenly had a huge American Empire with no one in charge and suddenly had a huge number of Conquistadors demanding pay for their services. The Hacienda helped solve both problems, it gave the American colonies administrators and it let the King pay his mercenaries with free land rather than money. | **What problems did the hacienda system solve?** |
| **History** | |
| **Encomiendas:** the first haciendas were truly massive land grants called Encomiendas. These grants might include dozens of square miles and the largest had 23,000 people already living within its borders. The Encomiendas were not just grants of land but of people too. The encomienda gave to its owner the right to enslave every Non-Spaniard living on the land. And so the Americas were carved up and the native people forced into work camps, where they died in the hundreds of thousands. | **What was an Encomienda?**  **How did they affect native Americans?** |
| **Profits:** the sad truth is that the Encomiendas had enormous success as businesses. The conquistadors turned encomenderos immediately became among the richest men in the world as they forced native people into mines to drag up gold, silver, or iron or forced them into the fields to grow sugar cane, tobacco, or coffee. The huge slave populations combined with the value of those products allowed their owners to become the new aristocracy of the world. | **What was so profitable about the encomiendas?** |
| **African Slavery:** unfortunately too many people died on the encomiendas and soon the hungry haciendas were starving for lack of slaves. There were too few Americans left to meet the need and so Europeans turned to Africa. From 1450 to 1900, 12-20 million Africans were kidnapped from Africa and brought to the Americas. Millions more would be born into slavery in the new world. | **Why did Europeans start bring Africans to the Americas?**  **How many people were victimized by slavery?** |
| **Conditions** | |
| **The Bottom Line:** one very sad economic fact drove the cruelty of the Central American haciendas: it was cheaper to buy new slaves than to take care of them. Because of this, slaves were worked to death the moment they were old enough to do the work. In 1700, the life expectancy for a male slave once he started working was 7 years. Less than a quarter lived to the age of 30. When they died, the slave master just bought more. In fact, it was sometimes considered too expensive to raise babies and many masters would force their female slaves to have abortions—even when those children were the product of rape by the slave masters, which was so common that most slave women were probably raped at least once. | **What is the sad economic fact of the haciendas?**  **What was it like for the men on the haciendas?**  **What was it like for the women?** |
| **Treatment:** nothing was considered out of bounds for punishment. The slave master ruled through terror alone (slaves often outnumbered slave masters 50:1). Those who resisted were burned to death or sliced open and left to die or buried up to their necks to be eaten by ants. Amputations and rape were both used as punishment. Slaves almost always wore collars and often leashes. Those who ate too much of the product wore muzzles. | **Why did the slave master have to use fear to keep order?**  **What are some details how slaves were treated?** |
| **Justice:** perhaps the worst thing is that almost none of these men—the conquistadors, the slave owners, the slave traders, the system that allowed them, the societies that profited from them—ever faced justice. Slavery was eventually outlawed but those who had done it had acted within the law and were not punished. From 1500-1900, it has been estimated that something like 5-20 million Native Americans and 10 million African-Americans died as a result of being worked to death or executed for defiance. But no one was ever brought up for crimes against humanity. Slaves were never compensated for their suffering. Even after slavery, many slave owner families stayed rich. Many of those families are still rich. | **How many people died from slavery?**  **How were slaves compensated?**  **How were slave owners punished?** |