



Name _____

What is Cinco de Mayo?

Read about the meaning behind Cinco de Mayo and why it was important and answer the questions that follow.

Cinco de Mayo is the celebration of the courage of the Mexican people during the Battle of Puebla or 'La Batalla de Puebla' on May 5th, 1862. Cinco de Mayo means the fifth of May in Spanish.

Mexico had a national debt to foreign countries and had to temporarily stop making payments to them for two years. The English, Spanish and French were not happy about this. They went to Mexico to try and make them pay. The English and Spanish negotiated and left Mexico. France had other plans. They wanted to make a new empire under Napoleon III. Many believe that France wanted to do this so they could try and stop the United State from getting too powerful.

In 1862, the French army came equipped with the finest and most advanced military equipment available at the time. They had an army of 6,500 soldiers. The Mexican army only had about 5,000 soldiers. They were not well-equipped or trained. Although they were outnumbered, they managed to defeat the French army with their determination and spirit. This victory became a symbol of Mexican unity and patriotism.

This victory also kept Napoleon III from supplying the Confederate rebels in the United States for another year, thus giving time for the United States to build the greatest army in the world. This army eventually defeated the Confederates at Gettysburg and ended the Civil War.

Union forces were then sent to the Texas/Mexican border who made sure supplies of weapon and ammunition reached the Mexicans needed to fight the French. American soldiers were also encouraged to join the Mexican army to fight the French. In the Victory Parade in Mexico City, the American Legion of Honor marched along.

Although the French conquered Puebla and the rest of Mexico in March of 1863, Mexican and American pressure eventually made France withdraw its troops in 1866-1867 and the French-backed government that was in place soon fell.

Questions

1. What does Cinco de Mayo mean in English? _____
2. Why did the French want to invade Mexico? _____

3. How many troops did the French have? How many Mexican troops were there? _____

4. Who won the Battle of Puebla in 1862? _____
5. How did the victory help the United States? _____
