

Reading

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.

- 5 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, 10 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 15 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.

- 20 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 25 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 30 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 35 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.

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 Industrialisation of Mexico City took place in the early part of the 20th century.