

Chapter 13, Section 3 (Pages 444–447)

Colonial Latin America

Big Idea

Portugal and Spain reaped profits from the natural resources and products of their Latin American colonies. As you read, create a diagram like the one below to summarize the political, social, and economic characteristics of Colonial Latin America.



Notes

Read to Learn

Colonial Empires in Latin America (page 444)

Making Inferences

How much respect did the Spanish and the Portuguese have for their conquered peoples?

In the sixteenth century, Portugal dominated Brazil, and Spain established a huge colonial empire that included parts of North America, Central America, and most of South America. A new civilization called Latin America arose. At the top of the social scale were *peninsulares*, officials who had been born in Europe and who held all important government positions. Below them were the *creoles*, who were descendants of Europeans born in Latin America. Below them were *mestizos*, the offspring of marriages between Europeans and Native Americans. The offspring of Europeans and Africans were called *mulattoes*. The multiracial groups were considered inferior to *peninsulares* and *creoles*. At the very bottom of the scale were Native Americans and enslaved Africans.

The colonies provided wealth to Spain and Portugal by sending them gold, silver, sugar, tobacco, diamonds, and animal hides. Farming was done on large estates owned by Spanish and Portuguese landowners and worked by Native Americans. Native Americans were forced to pay tribute and provide labor. In Peru, the Spanish used the *mita*, a system that allowed authorities to draft native labor for the silver mines.

The kings, being far away, appointed officials called viceroys to oversee the colonies. The Catholic Church played a powerful role, as Catholic missionaries established many missions and villages where they both converted and controlled Native Americans.

