**The Blood Stained Road to Gold Name:**

**Date: Block:**

**Directions:**

1. READ the introduction and the story.
2. ANNOTATE while you read the introduction AND the story (circle unknown words, underline important phrases, “talk back” by writing your thoughts)
3. ANSWER the questions at the end of the reading.

Talk Back Below!

The Portuguese took the lead in exploring the unknown parts of the global in search of people, places, and goods to buy and sell. Their ships, called caravels, were faster and safer than those of their rivals. The voyages of Vasco da Gama and Bartolomeu Diaz proved that long sea voyages to remote new lands were possible. The way was open to explore and settle the continents that Columbus had found. In 1500, Pedro Cabral, while en route to India, reached the shores of what is now Brazil. The vast country was to become Portugal’s South American kingdom.

Spain soon became the leader in American explorations, however. Vasco Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean after crossing the Isthmus of Panama in 1513. Spain gained control of much of Mesoamerica and South America (except Brazil) because of the efforts of explorer-adventurers called conquistadors (conquerors). These were men looking for gold and fame. (Some were also eager to convert the Native Americans to Christianity.) For example, Hernan Cortes, with 550 men, 16 horses, and a few cannons, conquered the Aztec Empire of Mexico. In 1523 the Spanish king, Charles V, named Cortes governor and captain-general of “New Spain” in the Americas.

Francisco Pizarro, unlike Cortes, was uneducated and poor. He was a fearless and brutal conquistador who could not sign his own name. He had been with Balboa when he discovered the Pacific Ocean. In the 1520s, Pizarro was living in Panama when he heard rumors of a great treasure to be found in the land of the Inca (present day Peru). He was almost 50 years old, an elderly man in those days, but nothing could keep him from his dream of finding a great fortune. In 1524 he began the series of explorations that culminated in the conquest described in the story.

**“Diego de Almagro, I’d almost forgotten about you,” gasped Francisco Pizarro. “Where are the men you were supposed to bring?”**

**“Is this how you greet your longtime partner?” replied the exhausted Almagro. “You can see them in the distance. I rode ahead to get here as quickly as possible. Tell me all that has happened.”**

**“We spent almost two years struggling to get from Panama to this valley of Cajamarca,” said Pizarro. “Suddenly, facing us were thousands of howling Inca warriors led by King Atahualpa. What chance of success did my little army of fewer than two hundred have?”**

**“What did you do?”**

**“I sent my horsemen to call on Atahualpa,” said Pizarro. They did some trick riding in front of his house. The Inca were stunned and frightened by the horses. Then, I invited the king and his followers to visit us the next day.”**

**“Wasn’t that dangerous?”**

**“Perhaps, but we had to be brave and pretend that we were in control,” answered Pizarro. “At noon, Atahualpa appeared on a golden throne, surrounded by thousands of his men. I knew we couldn’t fight them face-to-face. Surprise was the only solution. I gave the signal. My horsemen rode among the Inca. The Inca were frightened and ran wildly in all directions.”**

**“Their spears, bows, and arrows were no match for our cannon. We slaughtered most of them and took Atahualpa prisoner.”**

**“What’s the point of holding him?” asked Almagro.**

**“He thinks he can buy his freedom in exchange for gold. For two months his Inca warriors have brought their gold treasures to us. You won’t believe this, Almagro, but we now have enough gold to fill a huge room.”**

**Pizarro took Almagro to see the gold-filled room.**

**“How are you going to move those bulky things back over the mountains?” asked Almagro. “And how are you going to give each of us his proper share of the loot?”**

**“Easy,” smiled Pizarro for the first time. “I’m having the Inca goldsmiths melt down everything and cast it into gold bars. One fifth goes off to Spain. The rest is for us – and our men.”**

**“You are generous,” grinned Almagro. “I congratulate you. You have discovered El Dorado (the country of gold), which all the conquistadors have been seeking. We must thank God for our good fortune.”**

**“I agree, let us thank God. But we must also not forget to thank our horses. We could never have defeated the Inca without them!”**

Pizarro had the Inca ruler executed for “treason” in 1533. He then pushed on to the Inca capital of Cuzco and stripped that city of its gold. He understood that Cuzco was too far inland to be the center of the Spanish government. Thus, in 1535 he built the seacoast city of Lima, “the city of kings.”

In 1537 Almagro returned from a long, useless trip across the Andes and the Chilean desert to find that Pizarro was in complete control of the new empire. Learning that he was no longer Pizarro’s “partner,” Almagro rebelled. But his army was defeated, and in 1538 he was executed. Several years later, Almagro’s men avenged his death by killing Pizarro in his own city of Lima.

Other Spanish conquistadors added to Spain’s empire an area twice the size of Europe. It was almost 100 years before the English would begin their conquests in North America.

**Questions for Review: Answer on a separate sheet of paper!**

1. Why were the Portuguese able to take the lead in exploration?
2. How did the conquistadors create a Spanish Empire in the Americas?
3. How was Pizarro able to defeat the huge army of Atahualpa?
4. Imagine that Pizarro is on trial for Atahualpa’s execution. What would be Pizarro’s defense? What would you say to help prosecute him?
5. Do YOU think Pizarro treated Almagro unfairly? Explain.