

THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

The Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910, is considered one of the most transformative and complex social movements of the twentieth century. Unlike many revolutions that follow a linear sequence of events, the Mexican Revolution evolved through multiple phases, shifting alliances, ideological conflicts, and regional differences. Its origins can be traced to deep economic inequality, political repression, and social injustice rooted in the long dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, whose rule is known as the *Porfiriato*. Díaz held power for more than three decades, claiming to bring stability and modernization, but in reality, his government concentrated wealth in the hands of a small elite while marginalizing the majority of the population.

During the Porfiriato, Mexico experienced economic growth through foreign investment, industrial expansion, railroad construction, and mining development. However, these benefits were not shared equally. Land became increasingly privatized and controlled by wealthy families and foreign companies. By the early 1900s, millions of peasants had lost their traditional lands and were forced to work under harsh conditions on large haciendas. Indigenous communities also suffered displacement, loss of autonomy, and systemic discrimination. At the same time, political power was tightly controlled by Díaz, who manipulated elections, silenced critics, and repressed any form of opposition.

The situation reached a breaking point when Francisco I. Madero, a wealthy but democratic-minded landowner, emerged as a prominent voice calling for political reform. In 1908, Díaz gave an interview to an American journalist where he stated that Mexico was ready for democracy and that he would not seek reelection. Inspired by this announcement, Madero ran for president in 1910. However, Díaz reversed his position, jailed Madero, and declared himself the winner through electoral fraud. After escaping prison, Madero wrote the famous Plan de San Luis, calling for the Mexican people to rise up on November 20, 1910, to demand free elections and the end of Díaz's dictatorship. This date marks the official beginning of the Revolution.

The initial phase of the Revolution succeeded quickly. Various regional leaders joined the uprising, including Pancho Villa in the North and Emiliano Zapata in the South. Their combined military pressure forced Díaz to resign and flee to France in 1911. While Madero became president and symbolized hope for democratic transformation, his government soon faced enormous challenges. Madero believed in gradual reform and constitutional methods, but revolutionary groups expected immediate changes, especially concerning land redistribution. Zapata, frustrated with Madero's slow response, issued the Plan de Ayala, accusing Madero of betraying the Revolution and demanding land for peasants.

Meanwhile, conservative forces, military leaders, and foreign interests also opposed Madero. In February 1913, a violent coup known as La Decena Trágica ("The Tragic Ten Days") led to

Madero's assassination. General Victoriano Huerta seized the presidency, establishing a military dictatorship. His actions reignited the Revolution, uniting various revolutionary factions against him. Key leaders such as Venustiano Carranza, Álvaro Obregón, Villa, and Zapata formed the Constitutionalist Army, determined to remove Huerta from power.

By 1914, Huerta was forced to resign, but this did not end the conflict. The revolutionary leaders turned against each other. Zapata and Villa wanted social reforms focused on land and rural justice, while Carranza and Obregón supported a more centralized and modernized national government. The division escalated into battles such as the Battle of Celaya, where Obregón defeated Villa using modern military strategies and trench warfare techniques influenced by World War I.

Despite their disagreements, the revolutionary period produced one of the most important political documents in Mexican history: the Constitution of 1917. Promoted mainly by Carranza's supporters, the Constitution established groundbreaking social reforms uncommon for its time. These included land redistribution, labor rights, limits on foreign ownership, education rights, and protection of natural resources. Articles such as Article 27 (land reform) and Article 123 (labor rights) continue to shape Mexican society today.

The Revolution also had significant cultural consequences. It inspired a new national identity centered on social equality, indigenous heritage, and cultural pride. Mexican muralism, led by artists like Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, emerged as a powerful artistic movement expressing revolutionary ideals. Their murals depicted the struggles of workers, peasants, indigenous people, and national heroes, transforming public spaces into visual narratives of social justice.

The armed phase of the Revolution lasted roughly a decade, but its political and social effects extended much further. Carranza became president in 1917, but conflict continued until Álvaro Obregón consolidated power in 1920. Zapata was assassinated in 1919, Villa in 1923, and Carranza in 1920. Although the Revolution did not solve all social problems, it reshaped the political landscape, weakening the old oligarchy and establishing the foundations for modern Mexico.

The Revolution also gave rise to the political system that dominated Mexico for most of the 20th century. After years of instability, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR)—later renamed the PRI—was created to unify revolutionary factions and provide political stability. Although the PRI eventually became associated with corruption and authoritarian practices, its creation marked the end of the violent struggle that began in 1910.

Economically, the Revolution had mixed effects. It disrupted production, reduced population growth, and caused widespread destruction. However, in the long term, it paved the way for agrarian reforms, state control over natural resources, and policies supporting industrialization. Socially, the Revolution empowered workers, strengthened union movements, and promoted the idea that political authority should serve the public interest rather than a privileged few.

The legacy of the Mexican Revolution remains powerful in modern Mexico. It serves as a reminder of the struggle for democracy, equality, and justice. Even more than a century later, the ideals of Zapata, Villa, Madero, and other revolutionaries continue to influence political discourse and inspire social movements. The Revolution also represents Mexico's identity as a nation that values freedom, cultural diversity, and the rights of its people.

In conclusion, the Mexican Revolution was not simply a war; it was a profound social transformation that reshaped the nation's political, economic, and cultural foundations. Its history is complex, full of contradictions, but also rich in lessons about leadership, justice, and the power of collective action. Understanding the Revolution is essential for understanding modern Mexico, as its impact continues to echo through the country's institutions, society, and national consciousness.

Reading Comprehension

Choose the best answer.

1. The Mexican Revolution officially began in:
 - a) 1890
 - b) 1910
 - c) 1920
 - d) 1905
2. One major cause of the Revolution was:
 - a) Too much freedom for workers
 - b) Foreign countries invaded Mexico
 - c) Severe inequality and loss of land
 - d) Mexico wanted independence
3. The long dictatorship that preceded the Revolution was led by:
 - a) Francisco I. Madero
 - b) Pancho Villa
 - c) Porfirio Díaz
 - d) Emiliano Zapata
4. Francisco I. Madero launched the Revolution with:
 - a) The Plan de Ayala
 - b) The Plan de San Luis
 - c) The Plan de Guadalupe
 - d) The Constitution of 1917
5. Emiliano Zapata focused mainly on:
 - a) Rights of factory workers
 - b) Land and agrarian reform
 - c) Foreign relations
 - d) Education reform

6. The event known as “La Decena Trágica” ended with:
 - a) Díaz resigning
 - b) Zapata’s assassination
 - c) Madero’s assassination
 - d) The writing of the Constitution
7. The Constitution of 1917 included reforms related to:
 - a) Royal families
 - b) Slavery
 - c) Land and labor rights
 - d) Colonial rule
8. Which group later emerged from revolutionary factions to unify power?
 - a) United Nations
 - b) PRI (formerly PNR)
 - c) Zapatistas
 - d) Mexican Royal Army
9. One long-term cultural impact of the Revolution was:
 - a) The creation of the Spanish monarchy
 - b) Mexican muralism
 - c) Abandonment of indigenous heritage
 - d) The end of all political parties
10. The Revolution ended around:
 - a) 1920
 - b) 1940
 - c) 1900
 - d) 1880

Present Simple

Choose the correct option.

1. The Mexican Revolution _____ an important historical event.
 - a) are
 - b) is
 - c) be
2. Porfirio Díaz _____ power for more than 30 years.
 - a) hold
 - b) holds
 - c) holding
3. Many people _____ for land and justice.
 - a) fight
 - b) fights
 - c) fighting

4. The Constitution of 1917 _____ social rights.
 - a) provides
 - b) provide
 - c) providing
5. Zapata and Villa _____ symbols of resistance.
 - a) is
 - b) are
 - c) be
6. The Revolution _____ important lessons for modern Mexico.
 - a) teach
 - b) teaches
 - c) teaching
7. Foreign companies _____ much land during the Porfiriato.
 - a) controls
 - b) control
 - c) controlling
8. The government often _____ the opposition.
 - a) silence
 - b) silences
 - c) silencing
9. Madero _____ democracy and change.
 - a) wants
 - b) want
 - c) wanting
10. Many students today _____ about the Revolution in school.
 - a) learn
 - b) learns
 - c) learning

PRESENT PERFECT

Choose the correct ANSWER

1. The Mexican Revolution _____ a symbol of social struggle.
 - A) has become
 - B) became
 - C) becomes
2. Many historians _____ the causes of the conflict.
 - A) studied

- B) have studied
C) study
3. The ideas of the revolution _____ modern Mexico.
A) influenced
B) influence
C) have influenced
4. Several leaders _____ international recognition.
A) gained
B) have gained
C) gaining
5. Students _____ about the revolution in school for decades.
A) have learned
B) learned
C) learning
6. Historians _____ many books about Pancho Villa.
A) wrote
B) have written
C) writing
7. The revolutionaries _____ difficult social conditions.
A) have faced
B) faced
C) face
8. Many people _____ the ideals of land reform.
A) supported
B) support
C) have supported
9. Mexico _____ politically since the revolution.
A) has changed
B) changed
C) changing
10. Women _____ an important role in the revolution's legacy.
A) played
B) have played
C) plays

PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

Choose the correct option (A, B, or C).

1. Historians _____ the Revolution's causes for many years.
A) have analyzed
B) have been analyzing
C) analyzed
2. Students _____ the lives of Madero and Zapata recently.
A) studied
B) have been studying
C) study
3. Mexico _____ social change since the early 20th century.
A) has been experiencing
B) experienced
C) experiences
4. Researchers _____ documents from the revolutionary period.
A) collected
B) collecting
C) have been collecting
5. Many museums _____ artifacts from the revolution.
A) have been preserving
B) preserved
C) preserving
6. People _____ the revolution's true impact.
A) debated
B) have been debating
C) debate
7. Teachers _____ the main events to students this semester.
A) explained
B) have been explaining
C) explain
8. The government _____ cultural memory about the revolution.
A) has been promoting
B) promoted
C) promotes
9. Scholars _____ the Mexican Revolution with other movements.
A) compared
B) have been comparing
C) comparing
10. Citizens _____ justice and equality since the revolution.
A) demanded
B) have been demanding
C) demand

PERSONAL Opinion Exercise (250 words)

Write your own opinion.

“Why is the Mexican Revolution still important today, and what lessons does it offer modern society?”