

# CINCO DE MAYO

## THE FIFTH OF MAY



On May 5, Mexicans celebrate a very important, special anniversary. Mexicans commemorate the victory of the national army, sent by President Benito Juarez and commanded by General Ignacio Zaragoza, against the French troops led by General Laurencez, in the town of Puebla, in 1862.



For Mexicans, it has special relevance because it was a forceful military victory against an invading army far superior in war materials and men coming from France ruled by Emperor Louis Napoleon III, the nephew of Napoleon I. The French forces numbered 7,000 men, while the Mexicans barely numbered 2,000 men.

**The Battle of Puebla.** After the fall of General Santa Anna's government, Mexico was in a bankrupt economic situation. Furthermore, the country was indebted to Spain, France, and Great Britain. Unable to meet their debt, these three powers decided to send a military contingent to Mexico that landed in the city of Veracruz in early 1862. Spain and Great Britain decided to abandon the conflict after the Mexican constitutional government of Juarez promised to pay the debt when they could. But, the French emperor Napoleon III took advantage of the Mexican weakness by sending an army to place a European king on the Mexican throne and take control of the territory. Napoleon III chose the Austrian prince Maximilian, brother of the emperor of the Austro-Hungarian empire, to be the king. Francisco Jose Benito Juarez did not agree with this plan. So, he faced the French troops in the town of Puebla and won a resounding victory.

With this victory, Mexico had won a battle, but not the war. French troops took refuge in the town of Orizaba, reorganized, and resumed the war a year later. In the second battle of Puebla, with 35,000 French against 29,000 Mexicans, France emerged victorious and took control of the country. Austrian prince Maximilian I

took over the throne of Mexico along with his wife, Carlota. Both of them were crowned emperors of Mexico in June 1864, beginning the second imperial period of the young country.

President Benito Juarez did not accept this intervention. He took refuge in the northern part of the country, and with the help of the American armed forces, especially Californians, he again resumed the war against France.

Because of the military pressures of Juarez and the United States government, which did not tolerate an imperialist and colonial power like France in Mexican territory, Louis Napoleon III decreed the withdrawal of French troops from Mexico, leaving only the defenseless on the throne. Maximilian, who ended up being defeated and finally shot on the Cerro de las Campanas, near the city of Santiago de Queretaro, on June 19, 1867.

May 5 is the most important civic festival in the country, along with the other national anniversary, the Cry of Dolores, which occurred on September 16, 1810. On that day, Hidalgo, the priest in Dolores, gave the Cry of Dolores speech, which started the independence movement of Mexico against Spanish domination.



For Mexicans, the battle of Puebla also demonstrated that a united people, with self-esteem and organized with a common objective, can defeat a much greater enemy. For Mexicans and Mexico, it is a source of patriotic pride. This date began to be celebrated already in the year 1867, in the state of Texas. Also, General Ignacio Zaragoza, was born in the same city of Puebla, in the year 1829, at which time, the territory of Texas belonged to Mexico. For this reason, in the United States, and especially in the state of Texas, this battle is celebrated by the community of Mexican origin. Starting in 1930, the Battle of Puebla was also celebrated in other states of the North American country, with the city of Los Angeles, California, being the most significant city. However, today the most popular classes are celebrating this day with more joy. Mexico's victory over France is also understood as a fight by the most disadvantaged classes against any oppressor.



Finally, another fact that highlights the importance of this day for Mexicans is that all the soldiers who perform military service in Mexico swear their fidelity to the country that day before the flag of Mexico.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



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ANSWER THE QUESTIONS.

1. What country did the territory of Texas belong to when the military hero of the Battle of Puebla, General Ignacio Zaragoza, was born?
  - a. Mexico
  - b. Spain
  - c. France
  - d. the United States
2. What kinship relationship linked Napoleon I with Louis Napoleon III?
  - a. nephew-uncle
  - b. uncle-nephew
  - c. cousins
  - d. grandson-grandfather
3. In what year and place did the Battle of Puebla begin to take place?
  - a. 1862, in Puebla
  - b. 1867, in the state of Texas
  - c. 1810, in the town of Dolores, Mexico
  - d. 1930, in the city of Los Angeles, United States
4. Whose brother was Emperor Maximilian, placed on the Mexican throne by France?
  - a. Napoleon I, emperor of the I French Empire
  - b. Louis Napoleon III, emperor of the II French Empire
  - c. the Queen of Spain, Isabel II
  - d. the Emperor of Austria-Hungary, Francisco Jose

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



ANSWER THE QUESTIONS.



5. Why did Spain, Great Britain, and France intervene in Mexican politics in 1862?
- a. Mexico threatened the colonial dominance of these powers in Central America.
  - b. Mexico was financially bankrupt and could not satisfy its debt with them.
  - c. There was enmity between Benito Juarez and Louis Napoleon III.
  - d. They wanted to conquer the recently independent country.

6. The word anniversary, in paragraphs 1 and 7, means \_\_\_\_\_

- a. occasion.
- b. celebration.
- c. date.
- d. event.
- e. all of the above.



7. Which of the following facts is true?

- a. After the battle of Puebla, Mexico had no more wars.
- b. Napoleon III attempted to place a European king on the Mexican throne.
- c. The Battle of Puebla is celebrated only in Mexico.
- d. all of the above

8. May 5 is a civic festival as important to Mexico because of \_\_\_\_\_

- a. the Independence Day of the United States on July 4, 1776.
- b. The Cry of Dolores, which occurred on September 16, 1810.
- c. June 19, 1867.
- d. none of the above dates.
- e. all previous dates.

