CHAPTER 10

Mexico

Section 1: Natural Environments
Section 2: History and Culture
Section 3: Mexico Today
Objectives:

- What are the main landforms of Mexico?
- What climates, biomes, and natural resources does Mexico have?
Mexico’s landforms:

- Mexican Plateau makes up most of the country.
- Three mountain ranges border plateau.
- Coastal plains lie between mountains and the sea.
- Isthmus of Tehuantepec forms narrow strip of land in the south.
- Yucatán Peninsula, a flat limestone formation, is located in the southeast.
Climates and biomes vary by region.

- north and northwest—arid and semiarid; scrub vegetation and grasslands
- east and southeast—humid subtropical; forests.
- Elevation affects climate—rain shadows on western slopes; subtropical climates in some mountain valleys; cool highland climates at higher elevations
Natural resources

- Mexico has few major rivers, but some provide irrigation and hydroelectric power.
- Mexico is rich in minerals, including silver, gold, iron, lead, and mercury.
- Oil is the country’s most valuable resource.
Objectives:
- What were the cultures of Mexico like before the Spanish arrived?
- How did Spanish control change Mexico?
- What has Mexico’s history been like since independence?
Early cultures of Mexico:

- Many cultures existed, each with own language and customs.
- Farmers grew beans, corn, peppers, and squash.
- Complex civilizations—Maya, Olmec, Toltec, Zapotec—built large city centers.
- Aztecs created empire and great capital city, Tenochtitlán.
Changes under Spanish control:

- Spaniards conquered Mexico and spread disease, killing many.
- Spanish desire for wealth brought mining expansion and growth of large estates.
- Catholic missionaries converted Indians.
- Spanish built towns with plazas and churches.
- Mixed-race mestizo population emerged.
Mexico since independence:

- After independence (1821), powerful families still in control.
- Lost northern territory in 1848 war with United States.
- Late 1800s—foreign investment fueled economic growth, inequality.
- Mexican Revolution (1910–1920)—some reform, but power remained in few hands.
- Modern economy open to foreign business.
- Increasingly urban and industrial, with large tourist industry.
- Society changing rapidly; more democratic politics.
Objectives:

■ What are the economic and cultural regions of Mexico?
■ What challenges face Mexico?
Mexico’s regions:

- Greater Mexico City—cultural, economic, political center
- Central Mexico—fertile farm area; second city, Guadalajara
- Gulf lowlands—hot and humid; economy based on farming, ranching, oil production
- Southern Mexico—Yucatán and Chiapas highlands; Mayan areas, subsistence farming
- Northern Mexico—more prosperous; commercial agriculture, industry centered in Monterrey
Mexico’s challenges:

- economic inequality—few rich, many poor; promotes instability, migration
- crime—drug-related corruption and violence limit national progress
- infrastructure—social and economic advance hindered by poor water, sewer, transport