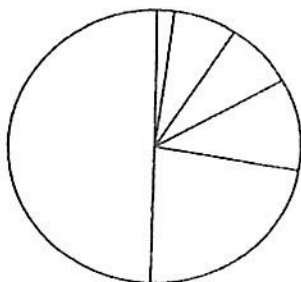


Hook Exercise: Ranking Social Groups

Directions: By the late 18th century, a rigid social hierarchy existed in colonial Latin America. Certain groups had more power and privilege than others, and there was little room for social advancement. Below are descriptions of the main social classes that made up colonial Spanish America. With a partner, read through the descriptions and then fill in the circle diagram and social pyramid below.

- Mestizos were people of mixed Spanish and Indian heritage who in 1800 made up about 7% of the total population. Most mestizos were small farmers, shopkeepers, artisans, and overseers in mines and on haciendas (ranches and plantations).
- Peninsulares were people born in Spain who migrated to the colonies. Peninsulares made up less than 1% of the colonial population. Some peninsulares were very wealthy, but not all. Peninsulares worked in high-ranking jobs in the government, military and church.
- Indian peoples made up well over 50% of the population of colonial Latin America. These were the people who lived in Latin America before the arrival of the Spanish. By law, Native villages were forced to provide labor in Spanish mines and farms.
- Slaves were of African descent, and many were born in Africa. Slaves were about 11% of the population. Under colonial law, slaves were considered property and could be bought and sold.
- Mulattos and Free Blacks: Mulattos were people of mixed African and Spanish blood. More so than in North America, blacks in Spanish America were able to buy their freedom. Together, free blacks and mulattos made up about 8% of the population.
- Creoles were people of pure Spanish blood who were born in America. Their ancestry went back to the original conquistadores – something they were very proud of. Creoles made up about 23% of the population. Creoles owned the largest and richest mines and haciendas. Despite their wealth, Creoles held few high-ranking jobs in the government, church, or trade. These jobs went to the peninsulares.

Task One: Create a pie chart that shows the names and percentages of the six social classes in colonial Latin America.



Task Two: Determine where you think each group falls in the social hierarchy. Write each social class name on the pyramid. Be prepared to defend your decisions.

Spanish America
Social Hierarchy

