



Taking the Lead

By: Toussaint L'Ouverture

I was born Toussaint Breda in 1743 in the French colony called Saint Domingue. My father was captured in Africa and my mother was an American-born slave. I was much luckier than most slaves in my land because my master had me trained as a house servant. In the household, I learned to read and write, skills that allowed me to learn much about the world. I read everything I could find, but perhaps the most important book were by European writers of the Enlightenment. These books taught me to believe in freedom and equality for all, though neither existed in my country.

In 1789 events in Europe brought hope to my people and to me. The French Revolution ended the king's rule there and introduced new ideas to the government. The leaders of the Revolution gave rights to blacks and mulattoes, but the plantation owners in the colonies fought this. When the government again changed the law to please the planters, slave revolts broke out in my country.

I for one could not allow such injustice and became a leader in the slave revolts. I became known in my land and in Europe as "Toussaint L'Ouverture," which means "the one who finds an opening." I led my army of slaves in many successful battles against the French soldiers, and also against the Spanish and English troops who had come to help them.

In 1793, the new French government voted to end slavery in all French lands. I cannot begin to tell you how excited my people were to hear this news! We very much wanted this new government to succeed and we helped in every way we could. We fought against those in colonies who wanted to end the revolution and return to the old ways, but still the new government eventually lost power. The country of France was in poor condition after years of fighting. Many people were without work and their families were hungry.

Napoleon Bonaparte, a general in the French armies, promised to improve the conditions and became the dictator of France. Wanting to help the plantation owners in the colonies, Napoleon again made slavery legal and the slave revolts began once more. We would not give up our freedom!

In 1803, I was invited to meet with Napoleon in France. I was promised safe passage and that my country, now called Haiti would be freed from French rule. I went to France as requested, but when I arrived I was not taken to speak to Napoleon. Instead, the French took me here to this prison in the mountains where they do not feed me very much. It is very cold here and I do not think I can survive much longer.

Their fight to oust the French was still raging when Toussaint died. Finally, in November 1803, Christophe and Dessalines defeated the last of the French forces. After Dessalines's New Year's independence declaration of 1804, Christophe set about rebuilding Cap-François, which was renamed Cap-Haitian. The name Saint-Domingue was changed to Haiti meaning a "higher place." Haiti was the first country in Latin America to break away from imperialism.

(Toussaint L'Ouverture died in prison, but the fight for Haiti's freedom did not end. Soon after Toussaint's death Napoleon began losing battles in his war to take over Europe. Unable to continue fighting slave revolts, he gave up control of Haiti and sold France's North American lands to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase.)

Name:

Nickname:

Conflict:

Countries Involved:

How did this person help gain independence?

Final Outcome:

Name:

Nickname:

Conflict:

Countries Involved:

How did this person help gain independence?

Final Outcome:

Name:

Nickname:

Conflict:

Countries Involved:

How did this person help gain independence?

Final Outcome:

Miguel Hidalgo

Independence for Mexico



As everywhere else in Latin America, Napoleon's actions in Spain affected the people of Mexico. Some became royalists (loyal to Spain), while others became rebels

(against Spain). Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a Catholic priest in the town of Dolores, became a rebel. On September 16, 1810, he rang his church bells and shouted his famous Cry of Dolores: "Long live our Lady of Guadalupe! Death to bad government! Death to the Spaniards!"

An army of Native Americans and Mestizos soon rallied around Hidalgo and Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico's most important Catholic symbol. On September 28, they conquered the city of Guanajuato. On October 17, the city of Valladolid surrendered without a fight. They continued east, and on October 30, defeated royalists on the outskirts of Mexico City. They moved on towards Guadalajara where their victories ended. The royal army commanded by General Felix Calleja destroyed them. Hidalgo retreated to the north. On May 21, 1811, Hidalgo was captured. He was tried by the Spanish Inquisition and found guilty of treason and put to death. The movement of Hidalgo started continued on. For the next decade, Mexicans fought for independence. Finally on September 28, 1821, Mexico won its independence. Today, when Mexicans celebrate Independence Day, they celebrate the day Hidalgo shouted in Dolores.



Name:

Nickname:

Conflict:

Countries Involved:

How did this person help gain independence?

Final Outcome:

Name:

Nickname:

Conflict:

Countries Involved:

How did this person help gain independence?

Final Outcome:

Name:

Nickname:

Conflict:

Countries Involved:

How did this person help gain independence?

Final Outcome:

The Liberator

By Kathy Wilmore from Junior Scholastic

Simon Bolivar (see-Moan bol-LEE-vahr) wanted independence for his homeland, and he would accept nothing less. It took 14 years of struggle but his courage, cunning, and fierce determination carried him to victory. His efforts released millions of South Americans from colonial rule and gave rise to five independent nations.



Yearning for Independence

Simon Bolivar was born to a wealthy family in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1783. Venezuela was then part of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, a huge colony of Spain. Simon was only three when his father died, and nine when his mother passed away. By then, his two sisters were married and had their own homes, so their grandfather, then an uncle raised him and his brother.

Bolivar's education was left to tutors hired by his uncle. One of them Simon Rodriguez, changed the boy's fate. Rodriguez gave him books by European writers who supported "the rights of man." They called for an end to monarchies and the founding republics. Such ideals thrilled young Bolivar, and he vowed to liberate his country.

In 1810, France's emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, invaded Spain. With Spain weakened, rebellion erupted in its colonies. Bolivar joined Venezuela's patriot army and soon became an outspoken leader. The following year, a national congress met in Caracas and issued a declaration of independence.

The new republic was short lived. In 1812, Spain regained control. Bolivar fled to Cartagena (kar-tah-Hay-nah) in present-day Colombia. There, he wrote "The Cartagena Manifesto," a document that urged patriots to continue to fight for freedom. In 1813, Bolivar again led patriot forces into battle. After fighting Spain's army for three months, he won control of Caracas. Grateful Venezuelans gave Bolivar the title El Libertador, the Liberator.

The second independent republic did not last long either. In 1814, Spanish and royalist forces stormed Caracas and crushed Bolivar's army. He was forced to flee again, this time to Jamaica.

Bolivar refused to give up. In "Letter From Jamaica" (1815), his most famous work, he wrote: "We have already seen the light, and it is not our desire to be thrust back into darkness. The chains have been broken...we must not lose faith." In 1817, Bolivar returned to South America. With about 2,500 troops, he hid near the Colombia-Venezuela border- and waited.

Victory at Last

"The art of winning," Bolivar once wrote, "is learned in defeat." By 1819, he was ready to apply what he had learned. He and his men crossed flooded valleys and ice-covered mountains to strike from a direction that took the Spanish by surprise. On August 7, Bolivar won the Battle of Boyacá. That was his greatest triumph. It gave him command of the capital, Santa Fe (now Bogotá), and the rest of New Granada.

Bolivar's victory in the 1821 Battle of Carabobo ensured Venezuela's freedom. In 1822, he and Antonio Jose de Sucre, a trusted general, did the same for Ecuador. Victories at Junín and Ayacucho in 1824 broke Peru free of Spain's colonial grip.

From Liberator to Dictator

Soon after, Bolivar became president of the Republic of Gran Colombia (now Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador) and Peru. In 1825 part of Peru split into another state, named Bolivia in Bolivar's honor. The Liberator's brilliance in winning independence for South American colonies earned him another nickname: The George Washington of South America. Unlike Washington, however, Bolivar became a dictator.

Name:

Nickname:

Conflict:

Countries Involved:

How did this person help gain independence?

Final Outcome:

Name:

Nickname:

Conflict:

Countries Involved:

How did this person help gain independence?

Final Outcome:

Name:

Nickname:

Conflict:

Countries Involved:

How did this person help gain independence?

Final Outcome: