# Module: Latin America and the Caribbean, Topic Content: Cultural Influences of Mexico and Central America

## Title Slide

Cultural Influences of Mexico and Central America. Click next to begin.

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## Angel of Independence

The Angel of Independence was built in Mexico City in 1910. It commemorates the beginning of the Mexican War of Independence in 1810. The war lasted until 1821, and ended Spanish rule in Mexico and Central America. In the following decades, the region divided into separate nations.

## Cathedrals

Roman Catholic cathedrals are an important part of Mexico and Central America’s cultural landscape. The Our Lady of Assumption Cathedral is a prominent landmark in Nicaragua. In Honduras, the Basilica of the Virgin of Suyapa is a popular pilgrimage site for Catholics.

## Rainforest

The tropical areas of Central America and southern Mexico contain rainforest vegetation. In Costa Rica, approximately 25% of the country is protected rainforest. Tourists from around the world travel to Costa Rica to experience this beautiful natural environment.

## Mayan Ruins

The Mayans were highly-skilled engineers who built roads, aqueducts, and pyramids. Although Mayan civilization was largely abandoned by 1000 A.D. (C.E.), many ancient Mayan structures still stand today. These include the pyramid temples of Tikal in Guatemala.

## Monument to Cuauhtémoc

This monument was built in Mexico City as a tribute to Cuauhtémoc, the last emperor of the Aztec Empire. The Aztecs once controlled a large part of modern day central Mexico. Before the Spanish conquest, Mexico City was named Tenochtitlan and served as the capital of the Aztec Empire.

## Haciendas

Under Spanish colonial rule, arable land was divided into large plantations, called haciendas. A small minority of Spanish Europeans owned the haciendas. Labor was forced on the indigenous population and African slaves who were brought to New Spain.

## Social Structure

These eighteenth century paintings by Miguel Cabrera reflect the strict social structure of Spanish colonial society. In these societies, a person’s status was based on his or her racial ancestry and place of birth. This system was largely abandoned after independence from Spain, but the systemic inequality it created remained.