

Ponce de Leon

Juan Ponce de Leon was born in 1460 in Santeveras, Spain. De Leon was an explorer and fighter from an early age. He helped fight the Muslims in southern Spain in the early 1490's. He was on board Christopher Columbus' second expedition to the Americas in 1493. Rather than returning to Spain, the adventurer remained at an island called Santo Domingo (now called the Dominican Republic).

De Leon was soon appointed as the governor of the Higüey region of Santo Domingo. Like many Spanish explorers, he was bloodthirsty for gold. When he heard rumors that a nearby island called Borinquen (now Puerto Rico) was full of gold, he invaded the island and brutally conquered the natives. He was soon appointed governor of the island, but lost his title in 1511 because of his extreme brutality.

De Leon's misfortunes as governor did not stop him from looking for riches. During his search, he conquered many islands, including Bimini. After returning to Puerto Rico, de Leon took three ships and 200 men on a mission to explore lands to the north. De Leon hoped to find the Fountain of Youth, a mythical spring that was said to make anyone who drank its water young forever. After making several stops at Caribbean islands, de Leon and his men reached the east coast of Florida (St. Augustine) on April 2, 1513. He named the land "Pascua de Florida", or Feast of Flowers, because he discovered it on Palm Sunday. He claimed all of the land for Spain.

On April 8, 1513, de Leon and his men left northern Florida and sailed south along the Gulf Stream. After a fight between his men and natives in southern Florida, he sailed to Cuba. He tried to sail back to Bimini, but could not find it. De Leon soon returned to Puerto Rico where he sacked a rebellion of natives against Spanish rule. After returning to Spain, he was named Captain General by the King on September 27, 1514.

De Leon did not return to the New World until 1521 when he once again tried to find the island of Bimini. Instead, de Leon and his men landed on the gulf coast of Florida where they were met by hostile Indians who shot his men with arrows. De Leon himself was wounded and died a short time after sailing to Havana, Cuba in July of 1521.

1.) When was Ponce de Leon born?

2.) Where was Ponce de Leon in 1493?

- A. Spain
- B. America
- C. Europe
- D. Dominican Republic

3.) Circle all of the following that describe Ponce de Leon.

- A. Fighter
- B. Explorer
- C. Governor
- D. President

4.) What does "bloodthirsty" mean as used in the following sentence?

De Leon was soon appointed as the governor of the Higüey region of Santo Domingo. Like many Spanish explorers, he was **bloodthirsty** for gold.

- A. He or she is scared of something
- B. He or she would do anything to have it
- C. He or she is worried
- D. He or she wants it

5.) The Fountain of Youth was supposed to make those who drank from it _____ forever.

- A. Beautiful
- B. Tough
- C. Young
- D. Healthy

6.) What word best describes the Fountain of Youth?

- A. Faraway
- B. Mythical
- C. Non-fiction
- D. Believable

7.) What did Ponce de Leon discover?

- A. The Fountain of Youth
- B. North America
- C. Spain
- D. Florida

8.) When was Ponce de Leon named Captain General by the King of Spain?

- A. Before April 2, 1513
- B. Before April 8, 1513
- C. Before 1521
- D. After 1521

9.) Where did Ponce de Leon die?

- A. Cuba
- B. Spain
- C. Bimini
- D. Florida

10.) What happened last?

- A. The discovery of Florida
- B. Ponce de Leon is named Captain General in Spain.
- C. De Leon loses his title as governor for his brutality toward natives.
- D. 1515