For Richer or Poorer:

The Mexican Revolution and the Rights of Peons

Lauren Purdy

Junior Division

Individual Website

Early on in the year, my peers and I had learned about the American Revolution in American History and the Russian Revolution in English. As I continued to study the material, I began to develop an interest for rebellion. The idea of revolution captivated me because it showed how others would take desperate measures to fight for what they believed in. While conducting research about Russian dictator, Joseph Stalin, I stumbled upon long time Mexican leader, Porfirio Díaz, who was one of the most notorious dictators of the early twentieth century. It was from then that I considered building onto that, so I chose to research the rights of peons in the Mexican Revolution.

I began my research in the school library. From there, I was able to find the majority of my secondary sources and some primary sources, including newspaper articles and journal entries. Although the books were helpful for factual information, they gave me a broad outlook on different ideals expressed in the revolution. I was also able to picture what it was like to be in the revolution from the many photographs I located. Additional sources, including encyclopedia articles and important documents, were found using school databases.

I chose to present my research in the form of a website because I enjoy using technology for both creative and educational purposes. The website was to be created using the National History Day’s Weebly site. While adding “building elements,” I was able to organize different pages and incorporate my information with graphics and documents. I also enhanced my website with quotes from prominent figures and excerpts from key articles of the revolution.

My project relates to the theme in several ways. It focuses on the thirty-year reign of Porfirio Díaz, who took land from the lower and middle classes and rewarded it to the wealthy. There was uproar over his decision to run for reelection in 1910, and as a result, small uprisings led into a widespread rebellion to overthrow Díaz and bestow the rights that peons had before his dictatorship. The revolution also involved the responsibilities of those that fought and spoke for the rights of peons. Without them, the country of Mexico would have remained in a state of destitution and injustice.

The overthrow of Porfirio Díaz was the start of the revolution that ultimately led to a nine-year period of fighting for the rights of peons. People, like Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, led uprisings and gave speeches regarding the issue. As time passed, the new president, Venustiano Carranza, created the Mexican Constitution of 1917, which granted land from wealthy owners to the peons again. The Constitution also included the ideas of peasants and gathered social reforms never made by Díaz. Although the revolution was long-lived, the country of Mexico was no longer in a state of disorder and poverty, and the peons were given their rights in return.