

Human sacrifice

What did the conquistadors think?

When the Spanish explorers, led by Hernan Cortes, arrived in Mexico, they were shocked and appalled by the Aztec practice of human sacrifice.

The extract below was written by Bernal Diaz, one of Cortes' companions.

'I have already described the manner of their sacrifices. They strike open the wretched Indian's chest with flint knives and hastily tear out the palpitating heart which, with the blood, they present to the idols in whose name they have performed the sacrifice. Then they cut off the arms, thighs and head, eating the arms and thighs at their ceremonial banquets. The head they hang up on a beam...'



1. What does the extract tell you about how the Spanish forces felt about human sacrifices?

2. Why do you think the Aztecs carried out this practice?

3. What are your thoughts about the Aztecs making human sacrifices?
