

Simon Bolivar: Address to the Congress of Venezuela

Subject to the three-fold yoke of ignorance, tyranny, and vice, the American people have been unable to acquire knowledge, power, or [civic] virtue. The lessons we received and the models we studied, as pupils of such pernicious teachers, were most destructive...

If a people, perverted by their training, succeed in achieving their liberty, they will soon lose it, for it would be of no avail to endeavor to explain to them that happiness consists in the practice of virtue; that the rule of law is more powerful than the rule of tyrants, because, as the laws are more inflexible, everyone should submit to their beneficent austerity; that proper morals, and not force, are the bases of law; and that to practice justice is to practice liberty. Therefore, Legislators, your work is so much the more arduous, inasmuch as you have to re-educate men who have been corrupted by erroneous illusions and false incentives. Liberty, says Rousseau, is a succulent morsel, but one difficult to digest...

Legislators, meditate well before you choose. Forget not that you are to lay the political foundation for a newly born nation which can rise to the heights of greatness that Nature has marked out for it if you but proportion this foundation in keeping with the high plane that it aspires to attain. Unless your choice is based upon the peculiar...experiences of the Venezuelan people—a factor that should guide you in determining the nature and form of government you are about to adopt for the well-being of the people...the result of our reforms will again be slavery.

1. According to Bolivar, the people of Latin America_____
 - a. Have not been well prepared for self-government by the Spanish.
 - b. Have been well prepared for self-government by the Spanish.
 - c. Have been ruled well by the Spanish.
 - d. Have little desire for self-government.

2. Bolivar states that a government will be most effective if it_____
 - a. Adheres closely to theories of good government.
 - b. Imitates the structure of other successful governments
 - c. Is molded to fit the character of the nation for which it is built.
 - d. Is based on the rule of law.

3. **Critical thinking:** Would you describe Bolivar as practical or idealistic? Use examples from the excerpt to defend your position.

4. Did Bolivar's dream for government come true in most Latin American countries? Explain your answer using this excerpt and the information from the PowerPoint. Use the back of this sheet if you need more space.

