

---

**DOCUMENT 1.7****BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS, *Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies***

1542

Dominican priest Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566), one of the first settlers in New Spain, protested the treatment of Indians by the Spanish in this address to Prince Philip, the future king of Spain. In this passage, Las Casas advocates for the rights of native peoples and rejects the encomienda system.

They are by nature the most humble, patient, and peaceable, holding no grudges, free from embroilments, neither excitable nor quarrelsome. . . . They are also poor people, for they not only possess little but have no desire to possess worldly goods. For this reason they are not arrogant, embittered, or greedy. . . . They are very clean in their persons, with alert, intelligent minds, docile and open to doctrine, very apt to receive our holy Catholic faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs, and to behave in a godly fashion. And once they begin to hear the tidings of the Faith, they are so insistent on knowing more and on taking the sacraments of the Church and on observing the divine cult that, truly, the missionaries who are here need to be endowed by God with great patience in order to cope with such eagerness. . . .

Yet into this sheepfold, into this land of meek outcasts there came some Spaniards who immediately behaved like ravaging wild beasts, wolves, tigers, or lions that had been starved for many days. . . .

---

Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, ed. Bill M. Donovan (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 28.

**PRACTICING Historical Thinking**

**Identify:** A historian's **summary** can provide a short but accurate account of the original text. Summaries include key details and feature general statements of fact, attitude, or purpose. Summarize Las Casas's presentation of native peoples and the actions of the Spaniards.