

FLORIDA



THE EAST COAST OF THE USA: FLORIDA

- a) Divide the class into five groups. Each person in group A reads text A, each of group B reads text B, etc. Take notes of the background information, compare your notes and agree on the most important points.
- b) Make new groups of five, tell the others the important information from your text. Take notes on the other texts and go back to your first group and compare your information. Did you all understand the same things?
- c) Remember, you may use the information from this page for your quiz as well.

A. The Story of the Atocha

After Columbus had found America in 1492, the number of Spanish colonists grew very quickly in the New World and by the late 1500's Mexico City, Lima and Potosi were big cities. The colonists were especially interested in the continent's silver and gold. Between 1561 and 1748 Spain sent two big fleets a year to the New World. After silver and gold were brought aboard for the return trip, all the ships met in Havana, then sailed through the Gulf of Mexico north along the coast of Florida before turning east towards Spain. Weather and pirates were always very great dangers. As a military escort, the Atocha carried soldiers to defend the ship from pirates. For this reason, she was the ship carrying a lot of rich passengers as well as most of the silver and gold. On Sunday, September 4th, 1622 with the weather perfect, the fleet set sail for Spain. By the evening the wind started growing stronger through the night. The sea was mountainous, the Atocha drifted helplessly towards the reefs and was smashed violently on a coral reef where she sank at once. On July 20, 1985 the wreck of the Atocha was found lying in 55 feet under water.

B. A Hospital for Sea Turtles

Sea turtles are one of the Earth's most ancient creatures. The seven species have been around for 110 million years, since the time of the dinosaurs. The sea turtle's shell is ideal for swimming through the water. Unlike other turtles, sea turtles cannot retract their legs and head into their shells. Their color varies between yellow, greenish and black. Sea turtles are found in all warm and temperate waters throughout the world and migrate hundreds of miles between nesting and feeding grounds. Some sea turtles cover distances as far as 1400 miles between their feeding grounds and the beaches where they nest. Green sea turtles can stay under water for as long as five hours. Their heart rate slows to conserve oxygen, nine minutes between heartbeats. About 1 in 1,000 baby sea turtles will make it to adulthood. They are a source of food for crabs, birds, and other marine animals. However, the biggest threats to sea turtles by far are humans. Oil spills and entanglement in marine debris such as plastic bags and fishing lines are big threats to turtles. Also, the artificial lighting coming from beachside confuses turtles who normally follow the moon and stars' reflection off the waves to make it back to water.

