Document B: The Florentine Codex

And when the Spaniards had arrived a Xoloco, Moctezuma dressed and prepared himself to meet them with other great rulers and princes, his major men and nobles. They then went to meet him [Cortés]. They arranged beautiful flowers in gourds used for vases, in the midst of sunflowers and magnolias, they placed popcorn flowers, yellow magnolias, and cacao blooms, and they made these into wreaths for the head and for garlands. And they wore golden necklaces, necklaces with pendants, and necklaces with [precious] stones.

And when Moctezuma went to meet them at Huitzillan, he bestowed gifts on Cortés; he gave him flowers, he put necklaces on him; he hung garlands around him and put wreaths on his head. Then he laid out before him the golden necklaces, all of his gifts [for the Spaniards]. He ended by putting some of the necklaces on him.

The Cortés asked him: “Is it not you? Are you not he? Are you Moctezuma?”

And Moctezuma responded: “Yes, I am Moctezuma.” Then he stood up to welcome Cortés, to meet him face to face. He bowed his head low, stretched as far as he could, and stood firm.

Then he addressed him in these words: “Our lord, you are very welcome in your arrival in this land. You have come to satisfy your curiosity about your noble city of Mexico. You have come here to sit on your throne, to sit under its canopy, which I have kept for a while for you. For the rulers and governors [of past times] have gone: Itzcoatl, Moctezuma I, Axayacatl, Tiçocic, and Ahuitzol. [Since they are gone], your poor vassal has been in charge for you, to govern the city of Mexico. Will they come back to the place of their absence? If even one came, he might witness the marvel that has taken place in my time, see what I am seeing, as the only descendent of our lords. For I am not just dreaming, not just sleepwalking, not seeing you in my dreams. I am not just dreaming that I have seen you and have looked at you face to face. I have been worried for a long time, looking toward the unknown from which you have come, the mysterious place. For our rulers departed, saying that you would come to your city and sit upon your throne. And now it has been fulfilled, you have returned. Go enjoy your palace, rest your body. Welcome our lords to this land.”

When Moctezuma finished his speech, which he directed toward the Marquis, Marina explained and interpreted it for him. And when the Marquis had heard what Moctezuma had said, he spoke to Marina in a babbling tongue: “Tell Moctezuma to not be afraid, for we greatly esteem him. Now we are satisfied because we have seen him in person and heard his voice. For until now, we have wanted to see him face to face. And now we have seen him, we have come to his home in Mexico, slowly he will hear our words.”

Thereupon, Cortés took Moctezuma by the hand and led him by it. They walked with him, stroking his hair, showing their esteem. And the Spaniards looked at him, each examining him closely. They walked on foot, then mounted and dismounted in order to look at him.

*Source: The* Florentine Codex*, an account of Aztec life originally written by Mexican natives between 1570-1585 under the supervision of Spanish friar Bernardino de Sahagún, whose primary goal was to convert the natives of Mexico to Christianity.*

Guiding Questions :

1. Who wrote Document B? When?
2. Who supervised the writing of Document B?
3. How might this influence the content of Document B?
4. According to Document B, what did Moctezuma say to Cortés?
5. Does Document B corroborate the textbook account?
6. What is one reason Document B would be a reliable source to understand what happened when Moctezuma met Cortés?
7. What is one reason Document B would not be a reliable source to understand what happened when Moctezuma met Cortés?
8. How does Document A compare to Document B?