**Directions: Read the following article and complete the prompt below.**

**Colonial Latin America: The inequalities of life under the caste system**

People in “New Spain” were organized into a **caste system**, by law. This caste system was **based on race**. Those at the top lived very well. Those at the bottom lived very harsh lives.

**Who's Who in the Caste System:** The Peninsulares, (European born whites) considered themselves superior to the Creoles (Colonial born whites) and were supported in this belief by royal decrees from Spain. Both castes were, by law, politically and socially above the mixed bloods, the Mestizo and Mulattos, who were socially and legally superior to the Indians, who were socially superior to the Negroes.

**Top**

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| **Peninsulares** | **European born whites** |
| **Creoles** | **Colonial born whites** |
| **Mestizo** | **Mixed blood (Spanish-Indian)** |
| **Mulattos** | **Mixed blood (Spanish-Negro)** |
| **Indians** | **Natives** |
| **Negroes/Slaves** | **African** |

In New Spain, when a baby was baptized, it was **assigned for life to a caste by the baptismal priest**. This made the baptismal priest very important since he decided and declared at the baptismal to which caste the baby belonged. **This led to corruption in the priesthood** as a well placed bribe to a priest could improve your child's standing for the rest of its life. If you angered or upset the priest, he could decide that your child belonged in a lower caste.

The social stratification created by the caste system was rigidly enforced. Since it was based on race, it was impossible to move from ones birth caste into a higher caste. A woman could improve her social standing by marrying up in caste, but neither men nor women could move out of the caste into which they were baptized. This caste system **led to many problems and hatreds** between the castes.

Parents wanted their children to marry into a higher caste if possible, or at least within their own caste. As a result, many Creole women (Colonial born whites) married Peninsulare men (European born whites). This caused a shortage of wives for Creole men in their own caste, and forced them to marry women from lower castes, which affected their children. The Creole men (Colonial born whites) were already angry, as they were prevented by law from holding the highest ranking positions in the church and the government, positions their parents held, simply because their parents had been born in Europe and they had been born in New Spain. This created a great deal of jealously and discontent.

**The Indians and Blacks**, for most of the colonial period, **were subject to the "Tribute"**, which was a tax placed on every Indian or Black. This tribute was normally paid by an individual's village or employer. If the tribute was not paid, that individual could be thrown in jail. The tribute was one way for the empowered class (the top guys) to keep the lower castes under control.

The affect of the inequalities of the caste system was to cause great dissatisfaction in every caste level, except perhaps the highest. The Creoles and the Mestizos blamed the Spanish government for policies that limited their ability to socially advance. The Indians and Blacks blamed the government of New Spain for the harsh life they were forced to live.

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| **Answer the following questions:** | **Complete the statement, describing in 2-3 sentences the life of each Caste** |
| What was a Peninsulare? | My life as a Peninsulare was… |
| What was a Creole? | My life as a Creole was… |
| What was a Mestizo? | My life as a Mestizo was… |
| What was a Mulatto? | My life as a Mulatto was… |
| What was an Indian? | My life as an Indian was… |
| What was a slave? | My life as a slave was… |