

# The Liberator in Latin America

**Directions:** Simón Bolívar earned the nickname, “The Liberator” for helping bring independence to so many Latin American countries. Read [the article about Bolívar](#) and use it to complete the cause and effect graphic organizer below.

Cause	Event	Effect
	<b>Bolivar Joins the Independence Movement</b>	
	<b>Venezuela Declares Independence from Spain</b>	
	<b>Bolivar Leads a Surprise Attack in 1819</b>	
	<b>Venezuela Wins Formal Independence in 1821</b>	
	<b>Civil War Breaks Out in 1826</b>	

# The Liberator of Latin America

Simón Bolívar was born in 1783 to a wealthy family in Venezuela, which at that time was a Spanish colony. As a native to the New World, Bolívar was considered a “creole” and not allowed to attain the highest offices in society. His education, however, included several years of study in Europe. He married while in Europe, but soon after the couple reached South America his wife died of yellow fever.

Bolívar then returned to Europe and met with several important thinkers and politicians. One of them told Bolívar that the Spanish-American colonies had vast natural resources that could make them powerful—if only they could become free from Spanish control.

Bolívar returned to South America and joined the independence movement. In 1810, a group of rebels in Venezuela removed the Spanish viceroy (governor) from office and took control of the colony.

The next year, Venezuela declared itself independent from Spain. In 1814, however, the Spanish fought back and Bolívar led an army that was forced to flee the country.

During his exile, he called for all Spanish colonies to rise up against European rule to “avenge three centuries of shame.” In 1814, he wrote a famous call to arms, *The Letter from Jamaica*, which outlined a plan to create republics reaching from Mexico to Argentina and Chile.

After receiving help from the newly independent Haiti, Bolívar returned to Venezuela to face the largest army Spain had ever sent across the Atlantic. From 1815 to 1817, neither side won any decisive victories. However, Bolívar began to build the foundation of a victory. He declared the end of slavery to be one of his goals, thus winning greater support.

Bolívar made alliances with two groups of guerrilla soldiers, who harassed the Spanish army. Then in 1819, he devised a daring plan to cross the Andes Mountains and surprise the Spanish. His army of 2,000 first had to cross hot jungles, the Orinoco River, and freezing mountain passes. Many died, but Bolívar’s army was strong enough to defeat the Spanish in four decisive battles.

Bolívar returned to the city of Angostura, Venezuela, and joined a group working on creating a new government. At his urging, members voted to create the Republic of Gran Colombia, which would include modern Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. “The lessons of experience should not be lost on us,” he said. Europe had too many countries that constantly fought each other. “A single government,” he argued, “may use its great resources [to] lift us to the summit of power and prosperity.” Bolívar was named president and military dictator of the new republic.

Bolívar won formal independence for Venezuela in 1821 and Ecuador in 1822. He freed Peru from Spain in 1824 and Upper Peru in 1825, which renamed itself Bolivia. He was president of Gran Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. Bolívar hoped that these nations would unite and thus become stronger. Others did not share this vision, however. Even Bolívar’s closest allies in the fight for independence believed that there should be several countries, not one large one. By 1826, civil war had broken out.

After a civil war broke out in 1826, Bolívar declared himself military dictator. Opponents attacked his palace and tried to assassinate him. The Liberator was now seen as an enemy of the state. Venezuela withdrew from Gran Colombia, and soon after Ecuador followed. Finally, with his body wracked by tuberculosis and his heart sick over the conflict, Bolívar retired in 1830 and died later that year.

