

Grade 5 History & Geography

Unit 2: Maya, Aztec, and Inca Civilizations

7 lessons and a unit quiz. Use this pack with the **Maya, Aztec, and Inca Civilizations Student Reader** (print it, or download it once from the course) to teach the whole unit without the internet.

What is in this pack

- A lesson plan for each chapter: the Big Question, words to know, which pages to read, questions to talk over and the activity pages.
- The unit quiz, ready to print.
- Answers for the teacher at the back: every discussion question and the quiz key.

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Lesson schedule

Two or three lessons a week, about 30 minutes each. Tick each one off as you go.

	Lesson	Reader pages	Activity pages
☐	Chapter 1: The Maya: Rainforest Civilization	PDF pages 8–15	AP 1.1, AP 1.2, AP 1.3, AP 1.4, AP 1.5, AP 1.6
☐	Chapter 2: Maya Science and Daily Life	PDF pages 16–25	AP 2.1
☐	Chapter 3: The Aztec: Empire Builders	PDF pages 26–33	AP 1.3, AP 1.5
☐	Chapter 4: Tenochtitlán: City of Wonder	PDF pages 34–41	AP 1.5, AP 2.1, AP 4.1
☐	Chapter 5: The Inca: Lords of the Mountains	PDF pages 42–49	AP 1.3, AP 1.5
☐	Chapter 6: Inca Engineering	PDF pages 50–59	AP 1.3, AP 1.5, AP 2.1
☐	Chapter 7: The End of Two Empires	PDF pages 60–69	AP 1.1, AP 1.3, AP 1.5, AP 7.1
☐	Unit quiz	—	—

Page numbers are the PDF page numbers of the Student Reader file, so they match what your PDF reader shows.

Chapter 1: The Maya: Rainforest Civilization

THE BIG QUESTION

What do the ruins of the Maya tell you about the importance of religion to their civilization?

Words to know

- **Mesoamerica** — a historical region that includes what are today the central and southern parts of Mexico and the northern parts of Central America *The Maya were an early civilization of Mesoamerica.*
- **Maya** — a group of peoples who have inhabited a region that includes parts of present-day Mexico and Central America from thousands of years ago to the present. Before the arrival of Europeans, Maya cities thrived in rainforest locations between about 200 to 900 CE. *The Maya were skilled builders who constructed great stone structures.*
- **civilization** — a society, or group of people, with similar religious beliefs, customs, language, and form of government *The Maya civilization thrived for hundreds of years.*
- **architecture** — the style and construction of a building *By studying the architecture, we have learned a great deal about the Maya.*
- **archaeologist** — an expert in the study of ancient people and the objects from their time period that remain, generally including stones, bones, and pottery *In studying the ruins, the archaeologist made many key findings about the Maya.*
- **city-state** — a city that is an independent political state with its own ruling government *Thousands of people lived in the city-state of Copán.*
- **temple** — a building with a religious use or meaning *The priest performed important rituals at the temple.*
- **hieroglyph** — a picture or symbol representing an idea, an object, a syllable, or a sound *The scientist figured out what the hieroglyph meant.*
- **sacrifice** — to give or to kill something for a religious purpose *The loser of the ball game was doomed to be a human sacrifice.*

Read

Read Chapter 1 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 8-15. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. The text refers to a key question about the Maya civilization. What is the mystery?
2. Why do you think the disappearance of the Maya cities is considered a mystery?
3. What happened to the people and culture that built the great Maya cities?

4. The text says that the brief history of the disappearance of the Maya's cities reads like a movie plot. What do you think this means?
5. What did the two American explorers find in the rainforest in 1839?
6. How was the Maya civilization organized?
7. Why were pyramids important in Maya culture?
8. In what way are Maya hieroglyphs like a code?
9. Were the original American archaeologists able to translate and understand the meaning of the hieroglyphs? Why or why not?
10. Why do you think cracking the Maya code has enabled experts to learn a lot about the Maya?
11. Why, according to Maya legend, did the gods limit human understanding?
12. How does the phrase "like breath on a mirror" explain the Maya belief about human understanding?
13. What is pok-ta-pok?
14. In what way did pok-ta-pok have religious significance to the Maya?
15. What was the purpose of the Maya practice of sacrificing human beings?
16. Why do you think the Maya allowed the outcome of a game to determine who lived or died?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: What do the ruins of the Maya tell you about the importance of religion to their civilization?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.1: World Map — Teacher Guide PDF page 94
- Activity Page 1.2: World Geography — Teacher Guide PDF page 95
- Activity Page 1.3: Modern Map of North America, — Teacher Guide PDF page 96
- Activity Page 1.4: Geography of the Americas — Teacher Guide PDF page 97
- Activity Page 1.5: Map of the Maya, Aztec, and — Teacher Guide PDF page 98
- Activity Page 1.6: Geography of the Maya, Aztec, and — Teacher Guide PDF page 99

Chapter 2: Maya Science and Daily Life

THE BIG QUESTION

Why is the 365-day solar calendar employed by the Maya particularly impressive?

Words to know

- **astronomy** — the study of the stars, planets, and other features of outer space *The Maya developed advanced knowledge of astronomy.*
- **leap year** — a year that has 366 days, or one more than all other years, and occurs every four years *Our calendar has a leap year every four years that has an extra day.*
- **equinox** — a day in which daytime and nighttime are about the same length, which happens twice every year *When they reached a certain age, boys underwent an initiation ceremony to mark their entry into adulthood.*
- **priest** — a person who has the training or authority to carry out certain religious ceremonies or rituals *Maya priests carried out the initiation ceremonies for boys.*

Read

Read Chapter 2 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 16–25. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. What did the Maya use to make their observations about the stars?
2. What does the text imply, when it says that the Maya didn't have telescopes, computers, or satellites?
3. In what ways is the Maya solar calendar similar to the one we use today?
4. In what ways is the Maya solar calendar different from the one we use today?
5. The Maya calculated a year to be 365.2420 days long. This calculation has since been confirmed by modern scientists using complex modern tools. What does this suggest about the Maya civilization?
6. What clues indicate that the builders of the pyramid at Chichén Itzá placed their structure precisely according to observations of the skies?
7. What does the text's statement about the Maya system of numbers and use of zero suggest about the Maya?
8. What was the most common job held by the Maya people of the past?
9. At what age did Maya young people enter adulthood?
10. Knowing that Maya priests picked the dates for initiation ceremonies and marriages, what does this tell you about Maya culture?
11. Believing that some gods were good and some were bad, how did the Maya believe that the gods impacted their daily lives?

12. What evidence suggests to archaeologists that the Maya abandoned their cities sometime around 900?
13. What evidence argues against the theory that farmers rose up against their noble rulers?
14. What is suggested by the fact that there are millions of people living today who speak languages related to ones spoken by the Maya?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: Why is the 365-day solar calendar employed by the Maya particularly impressive?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 2.1: Summary of the Maya, Aztec, — Teacher Guide PDF page 100

Chapter 3: The Aztec: Empire Builders

THE BIG QUESTION

Why did the Aztec make human sacrifices?

Words to know

- **Aztec** — civilization that thrived in present-day central Mexico from 1325 to 1521 CE *The Aztec were ruthless warriors who dominated the region.*
- **nomadic** — moving around often in search of food; not settled in one place *Before building their capital city, the nomadic Aztec wandered for years.*
- **empire** — a group of countries or territories under the control of one government or one ruler *By conquering their neighbors, the Aztec built a vast empire.*
- **emperor** — the ruler of an empire *The Aztec emperor was thought to be a living god.*

Read

Read Chapter 3 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 26–33. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. Where on the modern map would Tenochtitlán be located?
2. According to the text, when did the Aztec civilization begin its rise in what is today central Mexico?
3. What does the legend suggest about the life of the Aztec before the founding of Tenochtitlán?
4. According to the legend, how did the Aztec choose the site on which they built their city?
5. How large was the population of Tenochtitlán at its height?
6. The text notes that no city in the United States was as large as Tenochtitlán, so what does this suggest?
7. What are some of the details that support the statement that the Aztec were fearsome warriors?
8. How did the conquest of neighboring groups help the Aztec build wealth?
9. In addition to food and goods, what did conquered people supply to the Aztec?
10. What did the Aztec believe about the end of the world?
11. How did the Aztec beliefs about the end of the world lead them to make human sacrifices?
12. How did the Aztec sacrifice humans?
13. What does the word seemed suggest in the excerpt from the text, “They [the Aztec] could even point to events that seemed to prove that the sacrifices worked”?

14. How did the Aztec regard their warriors?
15. How did basic Aztec beliefs about their society and their religion help make war such a central part of Aztec life?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: Why did the Aztec make human sacrifices?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.3: Modern Map of North America, — Teacher Guide PDF page 96
- Activity Page 1.5: Map of the Maya, Aztec, and — Teacher Guide PDF page 98

Chapter 4: Tenochtitlán: City of Wonder

THE BIG QUESTION

What does the description of Tenochtitlán reveal about Aztec civilization?

Words to know

- **causeway** — a raised road built over water to connect islands to a mainland *The soldiers marched out of the city on the causeway.*
- **canal** — a channel dug by people, used by boats or for irrigation *People used the canals like roads through the city, traveling by canoe.*
- **scribe** — a person whose job is copying written information *The scribes prepared copies of the codex.*
- **codex** — an ancient book with handwritten pages or parts *The archaeologist eagerly studied the codex.*
- **pictogram** — a picture or drawing that stands for a word or phrase *The pictogram of the snake showed that the tomb belonged to the king.*
- **litter** — a chair attached to two beams and carried on the shoulders of several people *The emperor entered the building carried on a litter.*
- **reign** — a period of time in which a king or queen rules *The empire reached its peak during the reign of the king.*

Read

Read Chapter 4 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 34–41. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. What made the city of Tenochtitlán so unusual to the first Europeans that visited the city?
2. Why do you think that the first Europeans did not expect to see a city like Tenochtitlán?
3. Why do you think the Aztec went to the trouble of building the gardens described in the text?
4. What do the images and captions on pages 31 and 32 suggest about the roles of men and women in Aztec society?
5. How were schools for noble children different from schools for ordinary Aztec children?
6. What special skills were involved in learning to be a priest?
7. Why do you think the Aztec used a social class system where people were trained for different roles?

8. You have read about the role of enslaved people in Aztec human sacrifices. What other role of enslaved people is suggested in the section “The Market”?
9. To what purpose is the center of the city dedicated?
10. What is suggested by the fact that the Aztec emperor’s palace is located in the city’s ceremonial center?
11. What details in the first paragraph of the section “Moctezuma II” support the idea that he was a great and powerful leader?
12. By referring to some “disturbing things” that were happening during Moctezuma’s reign, what is the text suggesting?
13. Thinking about the Aztec and their beliefs, why might the disturbing signs that occurred during Moctezuma’s reign have troubled the people of Tenochtitlán?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: What does the description of Tenochtitlán reveal about Aztec civilization?
- Use one of today’s words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.5: Map of the Maya, Aztec, and — Teacher Guide PDF page 98
- Activity Page 2.1: Summary of the Maya, Aztec, — Teacher Guide PDF page 100
- Activity Page 4.1: Domain Vocabulary: Chapters 1–4 — Teacher Guide PDF page 102

Chapter 5: The Inca: Lords of the Mountains

THE BIG QUESTION

Why were llamas so important to the Inca?

Words to know

- **Inca** — a civilization that thrived from 1438 to 1532 on the western coast of South America, covering most of modern-day Peru and part of Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina *The Inca built a great civilization that relied on a high degree of engineering skill.*
- **conquistador** — the Spanish word for conqueror *The conquistadors came to the Americas looking for wealth.*
- **geographical diversity** — the presence of many different kinds of landforms, waterways, or other geographic features in a region *The huge Inca Empire spanned a wide area and contained a great deal of geographical diversity.*
- **plateau** — a large area of high, flat ground *The city rested on a plateau between the mountain ranges.*
- **clan** — a group of families *The clan to which his family belonged was one of several in the village.*
- **alpaca** — a South American mammal valued for its long wooly coat *They wove warm clothes from the wool of the alpaca.*
- **llama** — a South American mammal valued for its endurance and for its wooly coat and meat *The Inca depended on the llama to carry large loads over great distances.*
- **census** — a count of the number of people living in a certain area *The Inca official came to the village to carry out a census.*

Read

Read Chapter 5 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 42–49. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. The text describes a scene from a dream. What is happening in that dream?
2. Why did the Inca bow before the Sapa Inca?
3. What are some similarities between the role of the Sapa Inca in Inca society and the role of Moctezuma in the life of the Aztec?
4. Can you describe the general geographical location of the Inca Empire?
5. In what modern-day country did the Inca civilization originate?
6. What details in the text support the statement that the Inca Empire was a land of great geographical diversity?

7. What was the most common way of earning a living for an Inca family as described in the text?
8. Why was the potato the main crop of the Inca?
9. What features of the llama made it so valuable to the Inca?
10. Why do you think a good pack animal was so important to the Inca people?
11. How did the Inca support the Sapa Inca and the rest of the empire?
12. How did the Sapa Inca make sure that his will was carried out in his empire?
13. What can you infer about marriages in the Inca society based on the fact that the He-Who-Sees-Everything arranged many of them?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: Why were llamas so important to the Inca?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.3: Modern Map of North America, — Teacher Guide PDF page 96
- Activity Page 1.5: Map of the Maya, Aztec, and — Teacher Guide PDF page 98

Chapter 6: Inca Engineering

THE BIG QUESTION

How did the Inca use their engineering skills to manage and grow their empire?

Words to know

- **official** — a person who carries out a government duty *The official came to the village to explain the new government rule.*
- **engineer** — a person who uses science and math to build useful objects or buildings *The engineer made plans for a new bridge.*
- **mortar** — a material used in building that is soft at first but that then gets hard and rocklike *The tall towers of the suspension bridge rise high above the valley floor.*
- **terrace** — a flat piece of land carved out of the side of a mountain or hill *The farmer's crops were planted in a terrace on the hillside.*

Read

Read Chapter 6 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 50–59. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. What key feature did the Inca Empire share with the Roman Empire?
2. How did the system of roads benefit the Inca Empire?
3. Why is the Inca road system considered to be such a fine example of engineering?
4. How did the geography of the Inca Empire challenge Inca builders?
5. What can you infer from the fact that one of the Inca bridges remained in use for hundreds of years after it was built?
6. How did the Inca overcome the challenge of farming on mountainsides?
7. How did the Inca overcome the challenge of a lack of a written language?
8. How far was a message able to travel each day in the Inca Empire?
9. According to the text, what is one purpose that the city of Machu Picchu served in the Inca Empire?
10. What can you infer about the fate of neighboring people conquered and captured by the Inca?
11. What methods were used to help newly conquered people adapt, adjust, and become loyal Inca subjects?
12. How did the Sapa Inca treat conquered people who were not cooperative?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: How did the Inca use their engineering skills to manage and grow their empire?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.3: Modern Map of North America, — Teacher Guide PDF page 96
- Activity Page 1.5: Map of the Maya, Aztec, and — Teacher Guide PDF page 98
- Activity Page 2.1: Summary of the Maya, Aztec, — Teacher Guide PDF page 100

Chapter 7: The End of Two Empires

THE BIG QUESTION

What were the factors that contributed to the end of the Aztec and Inca Empires?

Words to know

- **expedition** — a special journey taken by a group that has a clear purpose or goal *The two people were married in a religious ceremony.*
- **smallpox** — a serious disease that spreads from person to person and causes a fever and rash *Many people died of a disease called smallpox.*
- **immunity** — a body's ability to remain free of illness even after being exposed to the cause of the illness *The disease spread quickly because nobody had immunity to it.*
- **epidemic** — a situation in which a disease spreads to many people in an area or region *As a result of the epidemic, nearly half the students were absent from school.*

Read

Read Chapter 7 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 60–69. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. How did Moctezuma II learn about the arrival of the Spanish in his territory?
2. What can you infer from the strange description the traveler gave Moctezuma II about what he had seen?
3. What made Moctezuma think that the newcomers to his land might be gods?
4. What did Moctezuma do in response to the arrival of strangers in his land?
5. What do you think the text means when it says that the gifts that Moctezuma sent to Cortés caught Cortés's attention?
6. What did Cortés encounter as he traveled west toward Tenochtitlán?
7. What happened when the Spanish first arrived in Tenochtitlán?
8. Do you think the Spaniards were correct to distrust the Aztec? Why or why not?
9. What did the Spaniards do after they fled Tenochtitlán?
10. What factors helped enable the final Spanish conquest of the Aztec capital?
11. How were the experiences of the Aztec and Inca with Spanish explorers similar?
12. What did the strange Spanish visitors leave behind that affected the Inca?
13. What lured Pizarro to the empire of the Inca?
14. What lesson might the Sapa Inca have taken from the experience of the Aztec if he had had knowledge of what occurred to them?

15. Do you think Pizarro treated the Sapa Inca honorably when he arranged a meeting at Cajamarca?
16. What did Pizarro do after he collected the ransom offered for Atahualpa?
17. What can you infer about the state of the Inca Empire by its quick collapse following the death of Atahualpa?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: What were the factors that contributed to the end of the Aztec and Inca Empires?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.1: World Map — Teacher Guide PDF page 94
- Activity Page 1.3: Modern Map of North America, — Teacher Guide PDF page 96
- Activity Page 1.5: Map of the Maya, Aztec, and — Teacher Guide PDF page 98
- Activity Page 7.1: Domain Vocabulary: Chapters 5–7 — Teacher Guide PDF pages 104–105

UNIT QUIZ

Maya, Aztec, and Inca Civilizations

Name: _____ Date: _____

Circle the letter of the best answer.

- 1.** Where was the Maya civilization located?
 - a) in present-day Argentina
 - b) in present-day Brazil
 - c) in and around the Yucatán Peninsula
 - d) in and around the Andes Mountains
- 2.** What structures would an archaeologist most likely find among the ruins of a Maya city?
 - a) canals
 - b) suspension bridges
 - c) causeways
 - d) ball courts
- 3.** The Maya had advanced scientific knowledge, but they did not develop
 - a) telescopes.
 - b) a system of numbers.
 - c) an accurate calendar.
 - d) a system of writing.
- 4.** Which were the tallest and most important buildings in Maya cities?
 - a) pyramids
 - b) storehouses for food
 - c) observatories to study the stars
 - d) ball courts
- 5.** Where did the Aztec build the capital of their civilization?
 - a) in Cuzco in present-day Peru
 - b) in Tenochtitlán in present-day Mexico
 - c) on an island in the Caribbean
 - d) in the rainforests of the Yucatán Peninsula
- 6.** Which word best describes the Aztec before they built their empire?
 - a) sailors
 - b) farmers
 - c) wanderers
 - d) scientists
- 7.** The Aztec were best known as
 - a) great road builders.
 - b) fierce warriors.
 - c) talented musicians.
 - d) kindly rulers.

- 8.** Which of the following was not found in both the Maya and Aztec civilizations?
- a) the practice of human sacrifice
 - b) a number of independent city-states
 - c) impressive cities with grand buildings
 - d) life built around religion
- 9.** Who was the Aztec ruler in 1519?
- a) Hernán Cortés
 - b) Moctezuma II
 - c) Atahualpa
 - d) Francisco Pizarro
- 10.** Which of the following best describes the Aztec government?
- a) an empire united under a single ruler
 - b) a collection of city-states, each with its own ruler
 - c) tribal groups with no central government
 - d) a democracy with a president elected by the commoners
- 11.** What was unusual about the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán?
- a) It was surrounded by dense rainforest.
 - b) It had a network of expertly built stone roads.
 - c) It was built on an island.
 - d) It was built high in the mountains.
- 12.** What was one reason the Aztec waged war so often?
- a) They were always under attack from their neighbors.
 - b) They needed prisoners for human sacrifices.
 - c) They believed the gods enjoyed seeing humans fight.
 - d) They needed more land for growing crops.
- 13.** What region did the Inca rule?
- a) central Mesoamerica
 - b) east coast of Central America
 - c) Gulf coast of South America
 - d) Pacific coast of South America
- 14.** Which mountain range runs through the middle of the Inca Empire?
- a) Atlas
 - b) Andes
 - c) Rockies
 - d) Himalayas
- 15.** Who was the Sapa Inca?
- a) sole ruler of the Inca Empire
 - b) Inca god of the sun
 - c) Inca high priest in charge of sacrifices
 - d) wife of the Inca emperor

- 16.** The He-Who-Sees-Everything was
- a) the main Inca god.
 - b) an Inca tax collector and matchmaker.
 - c) the Sapa Inca.
 - d) a priest who lived on top of Machu Picchu.
- 17.** What animal played a central role in the life and culture of the Inca?
- a) camel
 - b) llama
 - c) horse
 - d) eagle
- 18.** For what purpose did the Inca use quipu?
- a) to cross a river
 - b) to cure an illness
 - c) to kill an enemy
 - d) to record information
- 19.** How were the Inca able to farm on mountainsides?
- a) They used alpacas to plow for them.
 - b) They cut terraces into the land.
 - c) They planted crops with long roots.
 - d) They built the Royal Road.
- 20.** What do Cuzco, Machu Picchu, and Quito have in common?
- a) They were European diseases.
 - b) They were Inca gods.
 - c) They were Inca communities.
 - d) They were Inca rulers.
- 21.** Inca stonework was especially impressive because
- a) the Inca had no way to cut stone.
 - b) there were few flat stones in the Andes.
 - c) the Inca did not use mortar.
 - d) earthquakes often knocked down Inca buildings.
- 22.** Which pair of adjectives best describes the way the Aztec and Inca first greeted the Spanish?
- a) threatening and violent
 - b) curious and friendly
 - c) bored and uninterested
 - d) bold and angry
- 23.** Who led the Spanish invasion of the Aztec Empire?
- a) Francisco Pizarro
 - b) Christopher Columbus
 - c) Hernán Cortés
 - d) Huayna Capac

24. What did Moctezuma and Atahualpa have in common?

- a) They were Spanish conquerors.
- b) They were emperors taken hostage by the Spanish invaders.
- c) They were cities destroyed by the Spanish.
- d) They were languages spoken by the Inca and Aztec.

25. Which of the following is not a reason that the Spaniards were able to quickly conquer the Aztec and Inca empires?

- a) Epidemics weakened the native people.
- b) Native populations were not fully united behind native rulers.
- c) The Spanish had better weapons and military technology.
- d) The Spanish forces outnumbered the native forces.

Answers

Chapter 1: The Maya: Rainforest Civilization

1. **The text refers to a key question about the Maya civilization. What is the mystery?**

The mystery is the disappearance of the Maya cities that were part of the thriving Maya culture from 200 to 900 CE.

2. **Why do you think the disappearance of the Maya cities is considered a mystery?**

The cities were thriving and strong, but then they ceased to exist. Nobody is sure why this happened.

3. **What happened to the people and culture that built the great Maya cities?**

Archaeologists and historians are unsure as to what happened to the Maya people. Their historical records stop around the year 900 CE, and their temples and buildings fell into ruin.

4. **The text says that the brief history of the disappearance of the Maya's cities reads like a movie plot. What do you think this means?**

The disappearance of the cities was abrupt and in some sense surprising, but it opens up key research questions for archaeologists.

5. **What did the two American explorers find in the rainforest in 1839?**

The explorers heard about ruins located in Copán. They found the Maya city and explored the area. They wrote a book that sparked worldwide interest in the civilization.

6. **How was the Maya civilization organized?**

The Maya civilization was broken into city-states. The Maya people spoke a common language, but they were not a unified country. Instead, city-states allied with each other but also went to war and conquered each other.

7. **Why were pyramids important in Maya culture?**

Pyramids were constructed as platforms for large temples that were used for religious purposes.

8. **In what way are Maya hieroglyphs like a code?**

In hieroglyphic writing, each symbol represents, or is code for, something else. You can only understand the writing if you know the code.

9. **Were the original American archaeologists able to translate and understand the meaning of the hieroglyphs? Why or why not?**

The original archaeologists could not understand the meaning of the hieroglyphs. It was like cracking a very complex code. Once later archaeologists determined the meaning of the "code," however, they were able to learn much about the Maya civilization.

10. **Why do you think cracking the Maya code has enabled experts to learn a lot about the Maya?**

When people gained the ability to read Maya hieroglyphs, they could read what had been recorded during the time period when Maya civilization actually existed. These written records provided much information about Maya culture and history.

11. **Why, according to Maya legend, did the gods limit human understanding?**

The gods limited human understanding in order to make humans less powerful.

12. **How does the phrase “like breath on a mirror” explain the Maya belief about human understanding?**

When a person breathes on a mirror, it makes it hard to see details in the image it’s reflecting. In the same way, people’s ability to see the world clearly and in detail is obscured by the gods.

13. **What is pok-ta-pok?**

Pok-ta-pok is a ball game that the Maya played on the ball courts that are found at the sites of many Maya cities.

14. **In what way did pok-ta-pok have religious significance to the Maya?**

The game was seen as a contest between good and evil. The winners were considered the “good,” and the losers were considered “evil.”

15. **What was the purpose of the Maya practice of sacrificing human beings?**

The Maya sacrificed humans in the hopes of pleasing the gods.

16. **Why do you think the Maya allowed the outcome of a game to determine who lived or died?**

Perhaps they believed the outcome of the game was actually in the hands of the gods.

Chapter 2: Maya Science and Daily Life

1. **What did the Maya use to make their observations about the stars?**

The Maya used their eyes—and only their eyes—to make precise observations.

2. **What does the text imply, when it says that the Maya didn’t have telescopes, computers, or satellites?**

The Maya lacked the kinds of tools that we consider to be necessary to the study of astronomy. This makes their accomplishments especially impressive.

3. **In what ways is the Maya solar calendar similar to the one we use today?**

It has a 365-day year that is divided into “months” or shorter segments of time.

4. **In what ways is the Maya solar calendar different from the one we use today?**

It has eighteen months made up of twenty days, plus one extra five-day period.

5. **The Maya calculated a year to be 365.2420 days long. This calculation has since been confirmed by modern scientists using complex modern tools. What does this suggest about the Maya civilization?**

The Maya measurement is astoundingly accurate compared to the one modern scientists have arrived at using modern tools and equipment. While we do not know exactly how the Maya arrived at this calculation, it suggests that they were very advanced in the scientific methods they used.

6. **What clues indicate that the builders of the pyramid at Chichén Itzá placed their structure precisely according to observations of the skies?**

On the two equinoxes each year, the sun strikes a sculpture in such a way as to cast the shadow of a serpent on the stairs, creating the illusion of a snake's movement as the sun's position changes.

7. **What does the text's statement about the Maya system of numbers and use of zero suggest about the Maya?**

The Maya "invented" the highly useful concept of zero, suggesting that they had an advanced understanding of mathematics.

8. **What was the most common job held by the Maya people of the past?**

Most of them worked as farmers.

9. **At what age did Maya young people enter adulthood?**

Maya boys and girls became adults at the age of fourteen.

10. **Knowing that Maya priests picked the dates for initiation ceremonies and marriages, what does this tell you about Maya culture?**

This fact illustrates the central role that religion played in Maya life and how the Maya people consulted the gods for all major actions and decisions.

11. **Believing that some gods were good and some were bad, how did the Maya believe that the gods impacted their daily lives?**

The existence of good and evil gods explained why life had both joys and sorrows.

12. **What evidence suggests to archaeologists that the Maya abandoned their cities sometime around 900?**

They stopped carving names and dates on their pyramids and temples as they had done before. The structures began to fall into disrepair.

13. **What evidence argues against the theory that farmers rose up against their noble rulers?**

There is no indication that the old rulers were replaced with new ones.

14. **What is suggested by the fact that there are millions of people living today who speak languages related to ones spoken by the Maya?**

This fact suggests that the Maya people scattered from their cities but that they did not disappear.

Chapter 3: The Aztec: Empire Builders

1. **Where on the modern map would Tenochtitlán be located?**

Students should identify central Mexico, specifically Mexico City, as the location of Tenochtitlán. Page 21

2. **According to the text, when did the Aztec civilization begin its rise in what is today central Mexico?**

The Aztec civilization began its rise about three hundred years after the Maya civilization declined.

3. **What does the legend suggest about the life of the Aztec before the founding of Tenochtitlán?**

The legend suggests that the Aztec lived difficult lives as nomads. Page 22 22

4. **According to the legend, how did the Aztec choose the site on which they built their city?**

The Aztec received a sign from a god directing them where to build their city.

5. **How large was the population of Tenochtitlán at its height?**

Between 150,000 and 200,000 people lived there. third sun died in the fire and ash of volcanoes. Those living under the fourth sun drowned in floods. The Aztec of Tenochtitlán believed they were living under the

6. **The text notes that no city in the United States was as large as Tenochtitlán, so what does this suggest?**

The Aztec and their city were highly advanced for their time. It would take centuries for people in the United States to build a city of that size and scale.

7. **What are some of the details that support the statement that the Aztec were fearsome warriors?**

The Aztec eventually conquered hundreds of city-states and ruled over five million people.

8. **How did the conquest of neighboring groups help the Aztec build wealth?**

Conquered people were required to send valuable goods to the capital. These varied depending on what valuable items the people produced.

9. **In addition to food and goods, what did conquered people supply to the Aztec?**

Soldiers captured in battle were used in the Aztec ritual of human sacrifice.

10. **What did the Aztec believe about the end of the world?**

They believed that the world would end in terrible violence.

11. **How did the Aztec beliefs about the end of the world lead them to make human sacrifices?**

The Aztec believed that they could put off the coming end of the world by making sacrifices to the sun god. They believed that human sacrifices gave the sun god strength to continue the world.

12. **How did the Aztec sacrifice humans?**

Priests killed victims by removing their hearts.

13. **What does the word seemed suggest in the excerpt from the text, “They [the Aztec] could even point to events that seemed to prove that the sacrifices worked”?**

The word suggests that what were actually natural events or even coincidences could mistakenly be viewed as the results of the sacrifices.

14. **How did the Aztec regard their warriors?**

They honored them. Being a soldier was one of the few ways an Aztec male could change his position in life.

15. How did basic Aztec beliefs about their society and their religion help make war such a central part of Aztec life?

Aztec religion required a steady supply of victims for sacrifice, and war provided one of the few ways for a person to advance socially. These two factors helped encourage warfare.

Chapter 4: Tenochtitlán: City of Wonder

1. What made the city of Tenochtitlán so unusual to the first Europeans that visited the city?

The city was large, and it was built in the middle of a lake. People traveled around the city in canoes.

2. Why do you think that the first Europeans did not expect to see a city like Tenochtitlán?

They may not have believed that people capable of creating such a great city were living in the Americas.

3. Why do you think the Aztec went to the trouble of building the gardens described in the text?

There may not have been a lot of farmland available for the large population, so the gardens were helpful in growing needed food. They were highly productive.

4. What do the images and captions on pages 31 and 32 suggest about the roles of men and women in Aztec society?

Aztec women and men had specific roles. Women's roles were centered on the home while boys were taught military skills.

5. How were schools for noble children different from schools for ordinary Aztec children?

The sons of nobles were trained to be priests or scribes.

6. What special skills were involved in learning to be a priest?

Students studied Aztec religion, astronomy, and reading and writing.

7. Why do you think the Aztec used a social class system where people were trained for different roles?

Possible answer: in a large city, it is necessary for people to take on different roles, including leadership roles.

8. You have read about the role of enslaved people in Aztec human sacrifices. What other role of enslaved people is suggested in the section "The Market"?

The text suggests that noble families kept enslaved people as servants.

9. To what purpose is the center of the city dedicated?

The center of the city is the religious ceremonial center, with many temples, including the great temple.

10. What is suggested by the fact that the Aztec emperor's palace is located in the city's ceremonial center?

The Aztec emperor is not only the leader of the state but also a religious figure and

leader.

11. **What details in the first paragraph of the section “Moctezuma II” support the idea that he was a great and powerful leader?**

Nobody could look Moctezuma in the eye or stand in his presence. Servants carried him about and made sure his feet never touched the bare ground.

12. **By referring to some “disturbing things” that were happening during Moctezuma’s reign, what is the text suggesting?**

The suggestion is that perhaps Moctezuma is not as powerful or in control of things as he seems.

13. **Thinking about the Aztec and their beliefs, why might the disturbing signs that occurred during Moctezuma’s reign have troubled the people of Tenochtitlán?**

The Aztec believed that their world would end violently and that they were in an ongoing struggle to persuade the gods to delay this violent end. The signs might have made people worry that they were not succeeding in this effort.

Chapter 5: The Inca: Lords of the Mountains

1. **The text describes a scene from a dream. What is happening in that dream?**

An emperor—the Sapa Inca—is being carried on a litter through the streets of an Inca village.

2. **Why did the Inca bow before the Sapa Inca?**

The Inca regarded the Sapa Inca as the son of a god, Inti.

3. **What are some similarities between the role of the Sapa Inca in Inca society and the role of Moctezuma in the life of the Aztec?**

Both were regarded with a combination of fear and awe. Both were carried on litters among the people, and in both cases ordinary people were considered unworthy to look directly at them.

4. **Can you describe the general geographical location of the Inca Empire?**

It was on the western coast of South America.

5. **In what modern-day country did the Inca civilization originate?**

The Inca civilization originated in modern-day Peru.

6. **What details in the text support the statement that the Inca Empire was a land of great geographical diversity?**

It was a large empire, stretching over two thousand miles and covering parts of many modern-day countries. It had a long coastline, arid plains, huge mountain ranges, a high plateau, and thick forests.

7. **What was the most common way of earning a living for an Inca family as described in the text?**

Most Inca were farmers who worked the land of the clan. They lived in windowless stone huts.

8. **Why was the potato the main crop of the Inca?**

It grew well in the high-altitude environment in which many Inca lived and farmed.

9. **What features of the llama made it so valuable to the Inca?**

Possible responses: It had great strength and endurance. It was able to find food anywhere and required little water, making it a useful animal for moving goods. The llama's wool was used to make cloth, its waste was used for fuel, and its meat was a source of food.

10. **Why do you think a good pack animal was so important to the Inca people?**

Possible answer: they lived in a huge empire, so transporting goods over long distances was a common challenge.

11. **How did the Inca support the Sapa Inca and the rest of the empire?**

In addition to working for themselves, the Inca had to spend part of their time working for the Sapa Inca and the empire.

12. **How did the Sapa Inca make sure that his will was carried out in his empire?**

Government officials, like the He-Who-Sees-Everything, traveled the empire, making sure people obeyed laws and paid their taxes.

13. **What can you infer about marriages in the Inca society based on the fact that the He-Who-Sees-Everything arranged many of them?**

Marriage was not a romantic matter. Instead, it was a matter of peace and good order in the empire.

Chapter 6: Inca Engineering

1. **What key feature did the Inca Empire share with the Roman Empire?**

Both great empires had a network of roads that linked all parts of the empire.

2. **How did the system of roads benefit the Inca Empire?**

The text implies that, like the Roman road system, the Inca system helped to promote trade and enabled government officials to quickly travel throughout the empire. The roads also allowed quick movement of troops.

3. **Why is the Inca road system considered to be such a fine example of engineering?**

It was built without modern equipment or machinery. The paving stones were precisely cut so that they fit together well.

4. **How did the geography of the Inca Empire challenge Inca builders?**

They had to build roads through mountains and across streams, which required lots of bridges.

5. **What can you infer from the fact that one of the Inca bridges remained in use for hundreds of years after it was built?**

This fact implies that the bridge was built to such a high standard that it remained functional for hundreds of years. It speaks to the skill and quality of Inca engineering.

6. **How did the Inca overcome the challenge of farming on mountainsides?**

They built terraces into the mountainsides. They also built irrigation systems for their terraces.

7. **How did the Inca overcome the challenge of a lack of a written language?**
One solution was the use of a quipu, an object that allowed for record keeping and sharing of information throughout the empire. They also used a network of runners to convey messages.
8. **How far was a message able to travel each day in the Inca Empire?**
A message could travel 150 miles in a day.
9. **According to the text, what is one purpose that the city of Machu Picchu served in the Inca Empire?**
It was a vacation spot for emperors.
10. **What can you infer about the fate of neighboring people conquered and captured by the Inca?**
They were not used extensively as human sacrifices. Instead, they were taken into the empire and made into loyal subjects, when possible.
11. **What methods were used to help newly conquered people adapt, adjust, and become loyal Inca subjects?**
They were connected to the rest of the empire with roads and introduced to the Inca language and religion. Their own native religion was not eliminated and in some cases was incorporated into the Inca religion.
12. **How did the Sapa Inca treat conquered people who were not cooperative?**
He focused on the troublemakers, removing them to places where they were surrounded by loyal Inca.

Chapter 7: The End of Two Empires

1. **How did Moctezuma II learn about the arrival of the Spanish in his territory?**
A traveler carried a report about what he had seen on the coast, including details about strange things and people.
2. **What can you infer from the strange description the traveler gave Moctezuma II about what he had seen?**
The Aztec had never seen any human beings so different from themselves, and they had never imagined things like the Spanish ships, weapons, and horses. They had no words for these things.
3. **What made Moctezuma think that the newcomers to his land might be gods?**
They did not look like the Aztec people, and there had been strange and troubling signs in recent times.
4. **What did Moctezuma do in response to the arrival of strangers in his land?**
He sent them gifts and tried to welcome them.
5. **What do you think the text means when it says that the gifts that Moctezuma sent to Cortés caught Cortés's attention?**
The gifts made Cortés aware that there were wealthy people living nearby who could help him fulfill his goal of becoming rich.

6. **What did Cortés encounter as he traveled west toward Tenochtitlán?**

He encountered many conquered people who had been treated harshly by the Aztec and who wanted revenge on their conquerors.

7. **What happened when the Spanish first arrived in Tenochtitlán?**

They were welcomed as guests.

8. **Do you think the Spaniards were correct to distrust the Aztec? Why or why not?**

Possible answer: It is true that Moctezuma had tried to stop the Spanish from entering the city and that the welcome given to the Spaniards may not have been sincere. The Spaniards had some basis for worrying that the Aztec would not put up with them for long.

9. **What did the Spaniards do after they fled Tenochtitlán?**

They rebuilt their army using unhappy subjects of the Aztec Empire.

10. **What factors helped enable the final Spanish conquest of the Aztec capital?**

The population was weakened by hunger and the effects of disease. The Spanish army was bolstered by many native fighters and by superior weapons.

11. **How were the experiences of the Aztec and Inca with Spanish explorers similar?**

The Sapa Inca heard a report from a messenger about a strange bearded people in a huge “floating house” that appeared off the coast. He felt fear because he connected the Spanish arrival with strange signs seen in his empire in recent times.

12. **What did the strange Spanish visitors leave behind that affected the Inca?**

The Spanish brought diseases that had a deadly impact on the Inca.

13. **What lured Pizarro to the empire of the Inca?**

He had heard rumors of an empire of even greater wealth than the Aztec Empire. This rumor was confirmed when he came upon an Inca temple decorated in gold and silver.

14. **What lesson might the Sapa Inca have taken from the experience of the Aztec if he had had knowledge of what occurred to them?**

He might have understood that even a small army of invaders can topple a mighty empire.

15. **Do you think Pizarro treated the Sapa Inca honorably when he arranged a meeting at Cajamarca?**

Possible answer: Pizarro tricked the Inca by calling on them as friends and by hiding his armed forces. Then, he killed thousands of unarmed Inca.

16. **What did Pizarro do after he collected the ransom offered for Atahualpa?**

Pizarro ordered the Sapa Inca to be murdered.

17. **What can you infer about the state of the Inca Empire by its quick collapse following the death of Atahualpa?**

Possible answer: The Inca had had their spirit crushed by the impact of disease and the death of their leader. The empire quickly fell as a result of the Spanish attacks.

Unit quiz key

1. c 2. d 3. a 4. a 5. b 6. c 7. b 8. b 9. b 10. a 11. c 12. b 13. d 14. b 15. a 16. b 17. b 18. d
19. b 20. c 21. c 22. b 23. c 24. b 25. d