

Objectives

As you teach this section, keep students focused on the following objectives to help them answer the Section Focus Question and master core content.

- Describe when and where people first settled the Americas.
- Analyze the main characteristics of the Olmec and Maya civilizations.
- Outline how the Aztec empire and Aztec society took shape.

Prepare to Read

Build Background Knowledge **L3**

Ask students to recall the rise of civilizations they have studied so far. Based on their previous reading, ask them to predict how ancient civilizations would develop in the Americas.

Set a Purpose **L3**

- **WITNESS HISTORY** Read the selection aloud or play the audio.

 **Witness History Audio CD,**
Elite Warriors Uphold an Empire

Ask **What was the role of warfare in Aztec society?** (*Warfare served to defend the empire and to capture humans for ritual sacrifice to the gods.*)

What do the artifacts suggest about Aztec beliefs? (*That they honored predatory animals and valued warfare.*) Tell students that they will learn more about the Aztecs.

- **Focus** Point out the Section Focus Question and write it on the board. Tell students to refer to this question as they read. (*Answer appears with Section 1 Assessment answers.*)
- **Preview** Have students preview the Section Objectives and the list of Terms, People, and Places.
- **Reading Skill** Have students use the *Reading Strategy: Recognize Sequence* worksheet.

 **Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 108**



Aztec eagle warrior

South American
bird warrior

**WITNESS HISTORY**  AUDIO

Elite Warriors Uphold an Empire

Among the Aztecs, a force of fierce soldiers emerged to aid the ruler in maintaining an empire. The most highly regarded fighters were eagle and jaguar warriors, who wore costumes resembling the honored animals for whom they were named (a tradition in other cultures of the Americas as well). Indeed, Aztec warfare served both a political purpose—defending the empire—and a ritual one. It was the gods whom the Aztec rulers believed granted them the right to rule. Sacrificing humans—the captives of battle—was the leading way to appeal to the gods.

Focus Question What factors encouraged the rise of powerful civilizations in Mesoamerica?

Civilizations of Mesoamerica

Objectives

- Describe when and where people first settled the Americas.
- Analyze the main characteristics of the Olmec and Maya civilizations.
- Outline how the Aztec empire and Aztec society took shape.

Terms, People, and Places

Mesoamerica	Tenochtitlán
maize	chinampas
Olmecs	tribute
stela	Teotihuacán
Valley of Mexico	

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Compare and Contrast Use a chart like the one below to take notes on similarities and differences in how early people adapted to climate and geography in different parts of the Americas.

Adapting to the Americas	
Climate	Geography
•	•
•	•
•	•

The Americas include two continents, North America and South America. Within these two geographic regions lies a cultural region called **Mesoamerica**, which is made up of Mexico and Central America. Some of the earliest civilizations in the Americas developed in Mesoamerica.

People Settle in the Americas

Sometime between 12,000 and 10,000 years ago, most scholars believe, people first arrived in the Americas. Scholars are still trying to understand the details of how this great migration occurred. Originally, it was believed that people came from Asia and entered through Alaska. This migration is thought to have taken place near the end of the last Ice Age, which lasted from about 100,000 years ago to about 10,000 years ago. During the ice age, so much water froze into thick ice sheets that the sea level dropped, exposing a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska in the area that is now the Bering Strait. About 10,000 B.C., Earth's climate warmed and the ice melted. As a result, water levels rose and covered the Bering land bridge.

The earliest evidence supported the theory that hunters followed herds of bison and mammoths across the land bridge and then south through North America, Central America, and South America. Recent data suggest something different—that people migrated to parts of the Americas much earlier and along coastal routes, perhaps paddling small boats. Although neither theory has been proved, researchers now base the dates of migration into the Americas mostly on evidence found at prehistoric sites.

Vocabulary Builder

Use the information below and the following resources to teach the high-use word from this section.

 **Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 107; Skills Handbook, p. 3**

High-Use Word

ingenious, p. 192

Definition and Sample Sentence

adj. clever, original, effective

Roger's solution to the puzzle was simple but ingenious.



Map Skills The descendants of the first Americans spread throughout the Americas, establishing both small settlements and large civilizations.

- Locate** (a) Bering Strait (b) Gulf of Mexico (c) Amazon River (d) Rocky Mountains
- Location** Which culture bordered the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea?
- Draw Inferences** In what types of environments did the Inca live? The Aztecs?



The Inca were famous for their goldwork, such as this figurine of a llama.

Adapting to New Environments The first Americans faced a variety of environments in which they could settle. For example, great mountain chains—the Rockies, the eastern and western Sierra Madre, and the Andes—dominate the western Americas. In addition, through the continents flow two of the world’s four longest rivers, the Amazon of South America and the Mississippi of North America. Far to the north and south of the continents, people learned to survive in icy, treeless lands. Closer to the Equator, people settled in the hot, wet climate and dense vegetation of the Amazon rain forest. Elsewhere, hunters adapted to deserts like the Atacama of Chile, woodlands like those in eastern North America, and the fertile plains of both continents.

People Begin to Farm and Build Villages In the Americas, as elsewhere, the greatest adaptation occurred when people learned to domesticate plants and animals. These changes took place slowly between about 8500 B.C. and 2000 B.C. In Mesoamerica, Neolithic people cultivated a range of crops, including beans, sweet potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, squash, and **maize**—the Native American name for corn. People in South America cultivated crops such as maize and cassava and domesticated llamas and other animals valued for their wool. By 3000 B.C. in parts of South America and 1500 B.C. in parts of Mesoamerica, farmers had settled in villages. Populations then expanded, and some villages eventually grew into the great early cities of the Americas.

Checkpoint How did early Americans adapt to different environments?

- Note Taking** Have students read this section using the Paragraph Shrinking strategy (TE, p. T20). As they read, have them fill in the compare-contrast chart showing Olmec, Maya, and Aztec adaptations to climate and geography.

Reading and Note Taking
Study Guide, p. 58

Teach

People Settle in the Americas

L3

Instruct

- Introduce** Direct students’ attention to the Geography of the Americas map. Have them locate the Bering Strait land bridge—which many scholars believe the first Americans crossed—and the borders of Mesoamerica.
- Teach** Ask students, using the map in their text, to locate and characterize the different environments early settlers would have confronted in the Americas. At each location, ask students to clarify what environmental challenges settlers faced and how they might have adapted to the surrounding environment.
- Quick Activity** Have students access **Web Code nap-0611** to take the **Geography Interactive Audio Guided Tour** and then answer the map skills questions in the text.

Independent Practice

Have students begin to complete the Outline Map *Mesoamerican Civilizations*, identifying the region of Mesoamerica and its natural features.

All in One Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 114

Monitor Progress

As students fill in their charts, circulate to make sure they list similarities in adaptations among early settlers. For a completed version of the chart, see

Note Taking Transparencies, 72A

Answers

- by learning to hunt and to domesticate plants suited to each environment

Map Skills

- Review locations with students.
- Maya
- Inca: mountains and desert; Aztecs: mountains and plateau

History Background

Settlement Clues Excavations at Monte Verde, Chile, have contributed dramatic evidence to the debate over just how long ago the first migrations to the Americas occurred. In 1997, a team of scientists concluded that artifacts uncovered at Monte Verde were at least 12,500 years old. This was over 1,000 years older than previous discoveries had indicated. In addition, Monte Verde is about 10,000 miles south of

the Bering Straits, while the earlier accepted “oldest” artifacts in New Mexico are much farther north. People would have needed many years to reach Monte Verde, so must have begun migrating much earlier than previously thought. More recently, scientists at Monte Verde have explored a second site that may indicate even older human activity.

Civilization Arises With the Olmecs

L3

Instruct

- **Introduce** Ask students to describe how the earliest peoples of Mesoamerica lived. What foods did they eat? Where were their homes? Then ask students to predict how these earliest communities might have changed as they grew larger. Urge students to read to confirm or revise their ideas.
- **Teach** Write *Olmecs* on the board. Ask students for key information about the Olmecs. List their ideas under the heading on the board. (*Chart should include: little known about; powerful class of priests and nobles; ingenious builders able to create and transport colossal stone statues; trade important; culture spread through trade; “mother culture” of Mesoamerica*)
- **Quick Activity** Have students begin to make a timeline of early Mesoamerican cultures.

Independent Practice

- **Note Taking** Have students fill in the Venn Diagram listing information about the Olmecs.
-  **Reading and Note Taking Study Guide**, p. 58
- Have students add to their Outline Maps, locating the Olmecs.

Monitor Progress

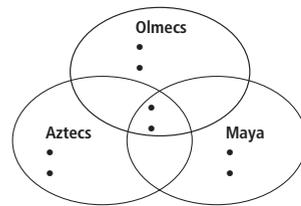
- As students fill in their Venn diagrams, circulate to make sure that they correctly identify key features of Olmec culture. Refer them to the chart on the board for guidance. For a completed version of the Venn diagram, see  **Note Taking Transparencies**, 72B
- Circulate to make sure that students have correctly located the Olmec civilization on their Outline Maps.



Colossal Olmec head from La Venta

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Compare and Contrast
Use a Venn diagram to keep track of key similarities and differences among the cultures of Mesoamerica.



Civilization Arises With the Olmecs

The earliest American civilization, that of the **Olmecs**, emerged in the tropical forests along the Gulf Coast of Mexico. The civilization lasted from about 1500 B.C. to 400 B.C. Compared to other civilizations, archaeologists know little about the Olmecs. They do not know where the Olmecs came from or what they called themselves. But evidence in the form of temples and large and small pieces of art suggests that a powerful class of priests and nobles stood at the top of society. These elite groups may have lived in ceremonial centers, while the common people lived in surrounding farming villages.

Much of Olmec art is carved stone. The smallest examples include jade figurines of people and gods. The most dramatic remains are 14 giant stone heads found at the major ceremonial centers of San Lorenzo and La Venta. Scholars believe that these colossal heads, which the Olmecs carved from 40-ton stones, are portraits of rulers. No one knows exactly how the Olmecs moved these stones from distant quarries without wheeled vehicles or draft animals.

The Olmecs also engaged in trade, through which they influenced a wide area. The grinning jaguars and serpents that decorate many Olmec carvings appear in the arts of later Mesoamerican peoples. The Olmecs also invented a calendar, and they carved hieroglyphic writing into stone. Because later Mesoamerican peoples adopted such advances, many scholars consider the Olmecs the “mother culture” of Mesoamerica.

- ✓ **Checkpoint** What aspects of Olmec culture have archaeologists uncovered?

The Maya Build Widespread Civilization

Among the peoples the Olmecs influenced were the Maya. By 300 B.C., the Maya were building large cities, such as El Mirador in Guatemala. By about A.D. 250, the Maya golden age—known as the Classic Period—began, with city-states flourishing from the Yucatán Peninsula in southern Mexico through much of Central America.

Agriculture Thrives Before the Maya developed large population centers, they lived scattered across the land. They developed two farming methods that allowed them to thrive in the tropical environment. In many areas, farmers burned down forests and then cleared the land in order to plant on it. After a few years, the fields were no longer fertile. The Maya would then abandon these lands until they could be used once again. In the meantime, farmers would burn and clear new lands for farming. In addition, along the banks of rivers, Maya farmers built raised fields to lift crops up above the annual floodwaters. These methods allowed the Maya to produce enough maize and other crops to support rapidly growing cities.

Powerful City-States Emerge The Maya cities that developed before and during the Classic Period never formed an empire. Instead, individual and powerful city-states evolved. The smaller city-states ruled over the people living directly within and near their borders. The largest ones reigned over neighboring areas as well—often requiring nearby cities to show allegiance to their kings and to participate in their ritual activities. Over the course of hundreds of years, many different city-states held

Connect to Our World

Connections to Today Maize, or corn, was extremely important in early Mesoamerican cultures. It was the main crop for the Olmecs. Because this early culture strongly influenced later cultures, they too relied heavily on corn. Ordinary Aztecs, for example, had a diet largely of corn and beans. They prepared corn by mixing ground kernels with water impregnated with lime to form a thick paste. They

formed the paste into a thin round *tlaxcali*, which the Spaniards would later call *tortilla*, and toasted it on a griddle. The *tlaxcali* often served as a utensil for scooping up food. Aztec diners also used it as a wrapper to fold around a mixture of meat and vegetables. Today, we know this item of Aztec cuisine as the taco. Both tortillas and tacos remain central elements in the modern Mexican diet.

Answer

- ✓ evidence of a strong priest and noble class, building ingenuity, strong trade, and strong influence in the region

Cities of the Maya Realm



The Maya Build Widespread Civilization L3

Instruct

- **Introduce** Ask students to recall the effects of Olmec trade on later cultures in Mesoamerica. What are some key features they would expect to find in the Maya culture?
- **Teach** Create three columns on the board, labeled *Agriculture*, *City-States*, and *Society*. Have students list details from the text about each topic. Ask them to summarize the importance of trade for the Maya.
- **Quick Activity** Have students access **Web Code nap-0612** to take the **Geography Interactive Audio Guided Tour** and then answer the map skills questions in the text.

Independent Practice

- Have students add to their timeline of early Mesoamerican cultures.
- **Primary Source** Have students read John Lloyd Stephens's writings describing his experiences at a Maya site and answer the questions on the worksheet.

All in One Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 109

Monitor Progress

Check answers to map skills questions.

power, with warfare and trade a constant theme of life among them. Cities such as Palenque, Copán, and Piedras Negras all carried great influence in their time, but the largest and most supreme power resided in the rulers of Tikal and Calakmul.

While the Maya were not united politically, city-states maintained regular contact through a system of economic exchange, which generated much wealth. Traders carried valuable cargoes long distances by sea and along roads made of packed earth. Trade goods included items of daily use—such as honey, salt, and cotton—and nonessential but prized items such as feathers, jade, and jaguar pelts. These goods might have been used in ceremonies or to show status.

Structuring Society Each Maya city had its own ruler, who was usually male. Maya records and carvings show that women occasionally governed on their own or in the name of young sons. Nobles served many functions in support of the ruler. Some were military leaders, while others managed public works, collected taxes, and enforced laws. Scribes, painters, and sculptors were also very highly respected. Merchants may have formed a middle class in society, though the wealthiest and most powerful merchants were certainly nobles.

The majority of the Maya were farmers. They grew maize, beans, and squash—the basic food crops of Mesomerica—as well as fruit trees, cotton, and brilliant tropical flowers. To support the cities, farmers paid taxes in food and worked on construction projects. Some cities also included a population of slaves, who generally were commoners who had been captured in war.

✓ **Checkpoint** How did the Maya political structure differ from an empire?



Powerful Maya rulers included Yax Pac of Copán (above, receiving the staff of leadership from the city's first ruler) and Pakal of Palenque (who wore the jade burial mask at left).

Differentiated

Instruction

Solutions for All Learners

L1 Special Needs L2 Less Proficient Readers

Have groups of students create graphic organizers about the development of Maya culture and society. First ask groups to choose one of the black headings under *The Maya Build Widespread Civilization* or *Cultural Life of the Maya*. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the material under the heading. Then have groups choose a format (such as a concept web or timeline) and details to include.

L2 English Language Learners

Use the following resources to help students acquire basic skills.

Adapted Reading and Note Taking Study Guide

- Adapted Note Taking Study Guide, p. 58
- Adapted Section Summary, p. 59

Answers

Map Skills

1. Review locations with students.
 2. The southern region had more rivers and was more mountainous.
 3. Sample: People moved from place to place, perhaps because they exhausted the soil.
- ✓ Instead of a centrally ruled empire, the Maya grew into city-states, each of which had its own region of influence.

Cultural Life of the Maya B

Instruct

- **Introduce** Recall with students some of the important segments of Mayan society (*nobles, scribes, farmers, sculptors, priests*). Ask students to predict the role each of these groups might play in the cultural life of the Maya.
- **Teach** Draw a concept web on the board with *Maya Cultural Life* in the center. Ask students to list headings for the outer cells (*Sculpture, Writing System, Astronomy/Mathematics*) and then to provide details to describe each aspect of Maya cultural life. Ask students why Maya civilization declined. (Possible answer: *Perhaps due to frequent warfare or soil exhaustion.*)
- **Quick Activity** Display **Color Transparency 33: Maya Hieroglyphs**. Use the lesson suggested in the transparency book to guide a discussion on Maya glyphs. Explain that a glyph can represent a syllable in a word or the entire word. Clarify that numbers can be indicated simply with lines and dots or in a more elaborate manner by showing people or gods that represent a number.

 **Color Transparencies, 33**



Photographs From the Past

British archaeologist Alfred P. Maudslay won fame in the late 1800s for his sharp and stunning photographs of Maya ruins, such as this stela showing a ruler from the city of Quirigua.

Cultural Life of the Maya

The cultural life of the Maya included impressive advances in learning and the arts. In addition, the Maya developed a complex polytheistic religion that influenced their cultural life as well as their spiritual beliefs. Many Maya today maintain elements of the traditional religion established by the ancient Maya, such as the belief that each person's spirit is associated with a particular animal.

Sculptors Leave a Legacy in Stone The cities of the Maya are known today for their towering temples and palaces built from stone. Temples rested on pyramid-shaped platforms that were often quite large. Atop the temples, priests performed rites and sacrifices, while the people watched from the plazas below. Some temples also served as burial places for rulers, nobles, and priests. Palaces may have been used as royal residences as well as locations for meetings, courts, and other governmental activities.

The Maya placed elaborately carved sculpture on many of their buildings. They also sculpted tall stone monuments, each of which is called a **stela** (STEE luh). These carvings preserve striking images of nobles, warriors in plumed headdresses, and powerful rulers. They also represent the Maya gods, including the creator god Itzamna (et SAHM nah), the rain god Chac (chakh), and the sun god K'inich Ajaw (keen EECH ah HOW).

Scribes Record Historical Events The Maya also developed a hieroglyphic writing system, which scholars did not decipher until recent decades. Maya scribes carved inscriptions on stelae that include names of rulers, mentions of neighboring city-states, and dates and descriptions of events. They also wrote about astronomy, rituals, and other religious matters in books made of bark paper. Spanish conquerors later burned most of these books, considering any works that were written by non-Christians to be unacceptable. Three books, however, were taken to Europe and have survived into the present.

Priests Develop Astronomy and Mathematics Maya priests needed to measure time accurately in order to hold ceremonies at the correct moment. As a result, many priests became expert mathematicians and astronomers. They developed an accurate 365-day solar calendar as well as a 260-day ritual calendar. Maya priests also invented a numbering system that included place values and the concept of zero.

Maya Civilization Declines About A.D. 900, the Maya abandoned many of their cities. In the Yucatán Peninsula, cities flourished for a few more centuries, but there, too, the Maya eventually stopped building them. By the time the Spanish arrived in the 1500s, the Maya mostly lived in farming villages. Archaeologists do not know for sure why Maya civilization declined, although theories abound. For example, frequent warfare may have taken its toll on society, or overpopulation could have led to over-farming and exhaustion of the soil.

Throughout the region, however, the remoteness of their jungle and mountain locations allowed many Maya to survive the encounter with the Spanish. Today, more than two million Maya people live in Guatemala and southern Mexico.

 **Checkpoint** What do Maya arts and writing tell us about their religion and history?

Differentiated

Instruction

Solutions for All Learners

L4 Advanced Readers L4 Gifted and Talented

Ask students to suppose they are creating a three-minute audio description of a tour through the Olmec, Maya, or Aztec civilization for a radio travelogue. Tell students that their tour should include the most interesting and culturally significant places of their civilization, such as Tikal or Tenochtitlán. Tours should be

from the point of view of a modern traveler but may include details about what the location may have been like in the past. Students may wish to do outside research to supplement information from the text. Tape record students' travelogues and share them with the class.

Answer

- ✓ that their religion was elaborate and central to the culture; that their history was well documented

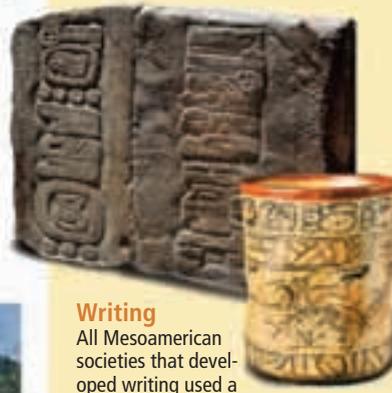
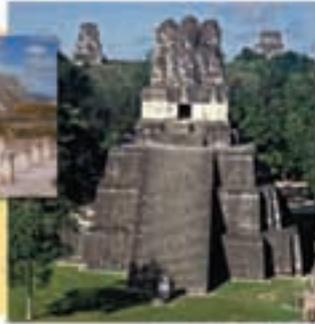


The Common Culture of Mesoamerica

In addition to the societies you are reading about in this section, numerous others arose in Mesoamerica between the time of the Olmecs and the arrival of Spanish explorers in the 1500s. While each developed individual traits that set it apart from the other groups, they all shared various cultural elements. For example, both the Maya and the Aztecs used the complicated “calendar round,” which combined days from a 260-ritual calendar and a 365-solar calendar to form 52-year cycles similar in cultural importance to our centuries.

Architecture

Throughout the region, architecture varied in style and decoration. However, the stepped pyramid prevailed as a basic shape of buildings in all cultures, from the small temple at the Toltec capital at Tula (above) to this enormous structure (right) at the Maya city of Tikal.



Writing

All Mesoamerican societies that developed writing used a hieroglyphic system. The level of complexity varied from group to group, however. The Zapotec (back) and the Maya (front) systems were the most advanced.

Sport and Ritual Although rules varied in the famous Mesoamerican ballgame, the basic format stayed the same. Players competed on an I-shaped ballcourt with sloped walls, like the Zapotec court below. They wore thick padding (as on the Maya ballplayer figurine above) to avoid injury as they tried to knock a solid rubber ball down the court and through a small hoop. The challenging game carried great ritual importance, representing the movements of the moon and sun. Sometimes, the losing team would be sacrificed to keep these heavenly bodies in motion (as shown at right).



Victor

Loser's severed head

Dying loser

Thinking Critically

- Draw Inferences** In what ways do you think these societies passed elements of culture to one another?
- Determine Relevance** How might learning about the shared elements of culture help scholars understand each Mesoamerican society?

Connect to Our World

Connections to Today A Maya legend tells of a battle between two brothers and the death gods. The battle takes place on a ball court in the form of a ritual game. After many games, deaths, and journeys, descendants of the original brothers defeat the gods and become the sun and moon.

Perhaps this legend explains why ball courts and ball games were a key feature of Maya cities. Maya

spectators watched as two teams competed to drive a solid rubber ball through a stone ring that hung from a wall. Opposing players moved the ball across the court using their bodies, but not their hands or feet. These early games were similar to modern-day basketball and soccer, in which players try to move a ball from one end of a court (or field) to the other to reach a goal.

Independent Practice

Have students, working in groups, examine the Infographic on common elements of culture in Mesoamerica. Ask students to first identify the three elements of culture shown. (*writing, pyramid-building, and ball-playing*) Then have groups discuss the following questions: How were writing and pyramids similar and different across Mesoamerican cultures? How do they compare to similar elements in other early cultures students have read about?

Monitor Progress

- Circulate to make sure that students have correctly listed information about Maya culture in their Venn Diagrams.
- Check answers to Infographic questions.

Answers

Thinking Critically

1. through trade, travel, and conquest
2. If they know about the culture of one society, they can more easily make hypotheses about another.

The Aztec Empire Forms in Mexico

E

Instruct

■ **Introduce: Key Terms** Have students find the key term *chinampas* and explain its meaning. Direct them to the illustration in their text, which shows a chinampa. Using the Idea Wave strategy (TE, p. T22), ask students what the chinampas show about Aztec society. (*that Aztec society was creative in the ways it adapted to the environment; that it was well-organized enough to undertake large projects*) Have them read to confirm their ideas.

■ **Teach** Trace Aztec settlement in the Valley of Mexico. Ask **Why did the Aztecs build their city on an island in Lake Texcoco?** (*They saw a prophesied sign, according to legend.*) **What challenges did the city's location present?** (*The land was swampy, so the Aztecs had to create floating gardens to grow crops on. They also had to build causeways to reach the mainland.*)

■ **Quick Activity** Display **Color Transparency 34: Codex** to show an example of the hieroglyphs and books Mesoamerican people were creating before the Spanish arrived.

 **Color Transparencies, 34**

Independent Practice

- Have students add to their timelines.
- **Link to Literature** To expand students' understanding of Aztec culture, have them read the selection of Nahuatl poetry and song.

 **Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 111**

Monitor Progress

Have students rewrite the black subheadings as questions and then write a sentence to answer those questions.

Answer

Caption filling in swampland, building causeways, and erecting buildings

The Aztec Empire Forms in Mexico

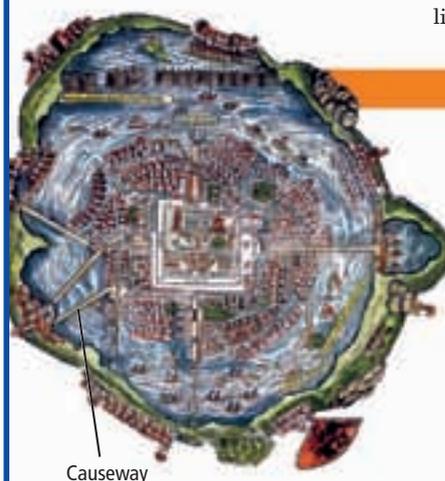
Sometime shortly after about A.D. 1200, bands of nomadic people from the north migrated into the **Valley of Mexico**, which lies in the high plateau of central Mexico. These people identified themselves as separate tribes, such as the Mexica (may SHEE kah), from whom Mexico gets its name. All the tribes spoke one language—Nahuatl (NAH hwaht el)—and believed their origins began in the same legendary birthplace, Aztlan. Together, these tribes are known as the Aztecs.

The Aztecs Settle in the Valley of Mexico In A.D. 1325, the Aztecs founded their capital city, **Tenochtitlán** (teh nawch tee TLAHN). According to Aztec legend, the gods had told the Aztecs to search for an eagle holding a snake in its beak and perching atop a cactus. When they saw this sign, they would know where to build their capital. Indeed, they finally saw the sign on a swampy island in Lake Texcoco (tesh KOH koh), and there they built their city. Today, Mexico City sits atop this same site.

As their population grew, the Aztecs found **ingenious** ways to create more farmland in their lake environment. They built **chinampas**, artificial islands made of mud piled atop reed mats that were anchored to the shallow lake-bed with willow trees. On these “floating gardens,” the Aztecs raised maize, squash, and beans. They gradually filled in parts of the lake and created canals for transportation. Wide stone causeways linked Tenochtitlán to the mainland.

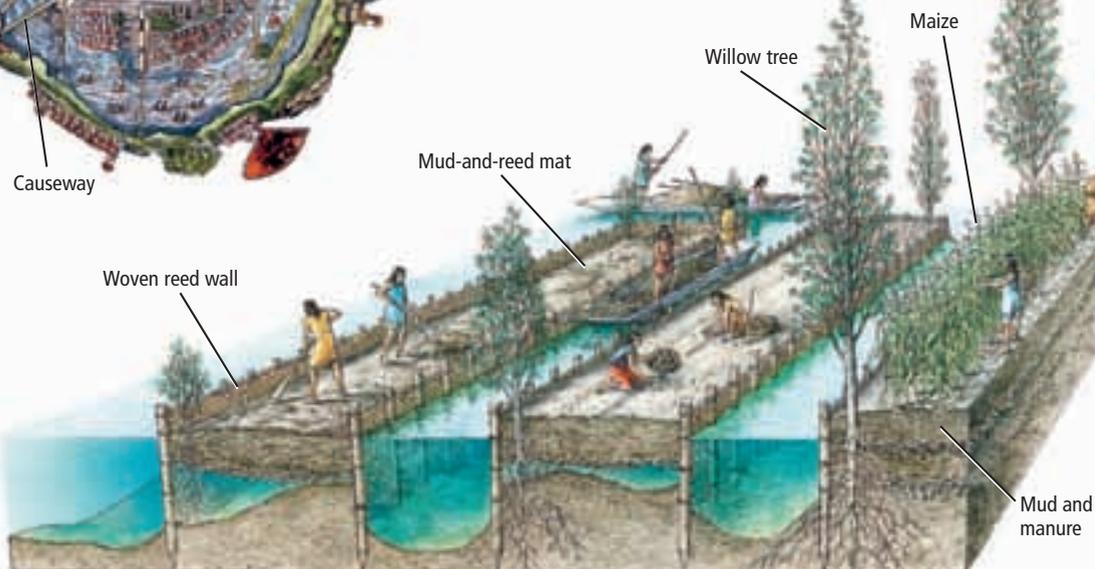
Vocabulary Builder

ingenious—(in JEEN yus) *adj.* clever, original, and effective



Tenochtitlán: Building an Island City

The Aztecs built causeways to connect Tenochtitlán to the rural settlements of the mainland. After the Spanish invaded in the 1500s, they drew a map of the city (at left). Although not to scale, it shows the causeways and dense buildings of the large capital. The diagram (below) shows how the chinampas were built. *What engineering skills must the Aztecs have used to build the city?*



Differentiated

Instruction Solutions for All Learners

L1 Special Needs **L2 Less Proficient Readers** **L2 English Language Learners**

Have students create Maya and Aztec flashcards. Provide each student with a topic such as architecture, agriculture, art, government, warfare, cities, social life, families, religion, medicine, science, or technology. Give each student two note cards. After reviewing

their topic in their text, have them create an illustration on one side of the card and 3 to 5 bullet-pointed facts on the other. Students should complete 2 cards, one for the Maya and one for the Aztecs, and should display and explain their cards to classmates.

The Empire Expands In the 1400s, the Aztecs greatly expanded their territory. Through a combination of fierce conquests and shrewd alliances, they spread their rule across most of Mexico, from the Gulf of Mexico in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west. By 1517, the Aztec empire numbered an estimated five to six million people.

✔ **Checkpoint** What are some advantages and disadvantages of building a city on an island in a lake?

Aztec Society Takes Shape

War brought immense wealth as well as power to the Aztec empire. **Tribute**, or payment from conquered peoples, helped the Aztecs turn their capital into a magnificent city. From its temples and royal palaces to its zoos and floating gardens, Tenochtitlán seemed a city of wonders. It was also the center of a complex, well-ordered empire.

Structuring Government and Society Unlike the Maya city-states, each of which had its own king, the Aztec empire had a single ruler. A council of nobles, priests, and military leaders elected the emperor, whose primary function was to lead in war. Below him, nobles served as officials, judges, and governors of conquered provinces. Next came the warriors, who could rise to noble status by performing well on the battlefield. The priests were a class apart. They performed rituals to please the gods and prevent droughts or other disasters.

A powerful middle class included long-distance traders, who ferried goods across the empire and beyond. With goods from the highlands such as weapons, tools, and rope, they bartered for tropical products such as jaguar skins and cocoa beans.

The majority of people were commoners who farmed the land. At the bottom of society were serfs and slaves, who were mostly prisoners of war or debtors. Despite their low status, slaves' rights were clearly established by law. For example, slaves could own land and buy their freedom.

Religion and Mythology Influence Culture The Aztecs believed in many gods, including Huitzilopochtli (weets ee loh POHCH tlee), whom they revered as the patron god of their people. His temple towered above central Tenochtitlán. The Aztecs also worshipped Quetzalcoatl (ket sahl koh AHT el), the feathered serpent who reigned over earth and water, plus the other powerful gods of an earlier culture that had been centered at the city of Teotihuacán (tay oh tee wah KAHN).

Teotihuacán had dominated life in the Valley of Mexico from about A.D. 200 to A.D. 750. The city was well planned, with wide roads, massive temples, and large apartment buildings to house its population of perhaps 200,000. Along the main avenue, the enormous Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon rose majestically toward the sky.

Citizens of Teotihuacán worshipped gods such as Quetzalcoatl and Tlaloc (TLAH lohk), the rain god. After Teotihuacán fell, possibly to invaders, its culture survived and greatly influenced later peoples of Mesoamerica. The Aztecs, for example, believed that the gods had created the world multiple times. In their mythology, it was in Teotihuacán that the gods created the world in which the Aztecs lived.

Representations of Tlaloc (left) and Quetzalcoatl (right)



Aztec Society Takes Shape

L3

Instruct

- **Introduce** Have a volunteer read the Primary Source quotation on the next page. Explain that the Aztecs believed that gods often sacrificed themselves for the good of the people. Tell students that Aztec religion and mythology strongly influenced the culture, and ask them to read to learn how.
- **Teach** Review the structure of Aztec society. Discuss how order permeated the culture and ask students to identify the effects of this in government, socio-economic classes, city planning, and expanding scientific knowledge.

Independent Practice

- **Biography** To help students learn more about Aztec political structure, have them read the biography *Nezahualcoyotl*, about the Aztec poet-king, and complete the worksheet.

All in One Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 110

- **Note Taking** Have students complete the third circle in their Venn Diagrams with information about Aztec society. Ask them to use their completed Venn Diagrams to identify other ways the Olmecs, Maya, and Aztecs were alike or different.

Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 58

Monitor Progress

Check Reading and Note Taking Study Guide entries for student understanding.

Link to Music

Aztec Musicians Aztec society centered around war and religion. Music thus also focused on these aspects of society. Aztec musicians played a variety of musical instruments, with drums, flutes, and rattles the most important. Other instruments included trumpets, rasps, tambourines, and whistles. Music played

an important role in religious rituals as it was often created to glorify gods. As a result, Aztec musicians enjoyed many rewards and privileges. They were exempt from paying certain taxes and tributes. In addition, musicians had the sacred task of calling the people to prayer at specific hours each day.

Answer

- ✔ advantages: safety from enemies, presence of fresh water, lake creatures for food, disadvantages: shortage of tillable and buildable land, no way to escape enemies

Assess and Reteach

Assess Progress

- Have students complete the Section Assessment.
- Administer the Section Quiz.

All in One Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 104

- To further assess student understanding, use  Progress Monitoring Transparencies, 24

Reteach

If students need more instruction, have them read the section summary.

-  Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 59

-  Adapted Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 59

-  Spanish Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 59

Extend Online

See this chapter's Professional Development pages for the Extend Online activity on the mystery of the Maya.

Answer

- ✓ Aztec society was structured as a pyramid, with a single emperor at the top, layers of nobles and other officials, a layer of priests, a middle class of merchants, a majority class of farmers, and a lowest class of slaves.

In this translation from an Aztec text, Nanahuatzin's bravery is underscored as he proves willing to sacrifice himself where another god, the moon, was not.

Primary Source

“It is said that when the [sun] was made, . . . there was fasting for four days. It is said that the moon would be the sun. And when four days were completed, it is said, the [sun] was made during the night. . . . a very great fire was laid . . . into which was to leap, was to fall the moon—where he was to gain renown, glory: by which he would become the sun. And the moon thereupon went in order to leap into the fire. But he did not dare to do it; he feared the fire. Then all the gods shouted, they said: “When [is this to be], O gods? Let the sun stop!” But little [Nanahuatzin] had already dared; he thereupon had leaped into the fire. Thus he became the sun.

And the moon, when he was deprived of the renown, the glory, was much shamed.”

—Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain*

In Aztec mythology, the gods frequently sacrificed themselves for the good of the people. They believed a god named Nanahuatzin (nah nah WAHTS een) had sacrificed himself to become the sun. To give the sun strength to rise each day, the Aztecs offered human sacrifices. Most of the victims were prisoners of war, who were plentiful because the Aztecs carried on almost continuous warfare.

Aztec Knowledge Expands Priests were the keepers of Aztec knowledge. They recorded laws and historical events in the Aztec hieroglyphic writing system. Some priests ran schools. Others used their knowledge of astronomy and mathematics to foretell the future. The Aztecs, like the Maya, developed a 260-day ritual calendar and a 365-day solar calendar.

Like many other ancient peoples, the Aztecs believed that illness was a punishment from the gods. Still, Aztec priests used herbs and other medicines to treat fevers and wounds. Aztec physicians could set broken bones and treat dental cavities. They also prescribed steam baths as cures for various ills, a therapy still in use today.

- ✓ **Checkpoint** How was Aztec society structured?

Looking Ahead

The Aztecs developed a sophisticated and complex culture. But among many of the peoples they conquered, discontent festered and rebellion often flared up. At the height of Aztec power, word reached Tenochtitlán that pale-skinned, bearded men had landed on the east coast. When the armies from Spain arrived, they found ready allies among peoples who were ruled by the Aztec empire. In a later chapter, you will read about the results of the encounter between the Aztecs and the newcomers from far-off Spain.

1 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-0611

Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Compare and Contrast** Use your completed chart and Venn diagram to answer the Focus Question: What factors encouraged the rise of powerful civilizations in Mesoamerica?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Recognize Sufficient Evidence** What types of evidence do you think archaeologists need in order to know for certain when people populated the Americas?
4. **Analyze Information** How do you think archaeologists use public buildings, monuments, and artwork to trace the influence of earlier civilizations, such as the Olmecs, on later people?
5. **Make Comparisons** Compare the Aztec and Maya civilizations. What characteristics do they share the most? In what way(s) do they differ the most?

Writing About History

Quick Write: Choose a Topic When you write a narrative essay, start by choosing a topic. Suppose you want to write a narrative from the perspective of an ancient Maya person. Make a list of topics that interest you, such as a day in the life of a Maya sculptor or an account of a battle between two rival Maya city-states. You may want to do research in books and on the Internet before you settle on a topic.

Section 1 Assessment

1. Sentences should reflect an understanding of each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section.
2. Factors include strong religious beliefs, active and aggressive armies, ingenious city planning, and structured political systems.
3. artifacts and remains that can be reliably dated to particular periods

4. Sample: If archaeologists find elements of one culture in a later culture's public buildings, monuments, and artwork, this suggests influence of the earlier culture on the later culture.
5. Sample: The Aztecs and Maya both had agricultural and highly structured societies. Both valued priests and religious rituals and scientific knowledge. Aztecs, however, had a single empire while the Maya had many separate city-states.

Writing About History

Topics should reflect knowledge and understanding of Maya life and culture.

For additional assessment, have students access **Progress Monitoring Online** at **Web Code naa-0611**.