

**Title**

MIA: The Maya Inca and Aztec

**Overview**

This is an introductory lesson on the geography and culture of the Maya, Aztec and Inca civilizations. Students will locate important sites to the civilizations on a globe and transfer their findings to a map. Students will then divide into groups to gain an overview of each civilization. Upon completion, they will share their findings with classmates.

**Objectives and Standards**

- SWBAT locate and identify specified locations in North and South America that are related to the study of the Maya, Aztec and Inca.
- SWBAT read and record information about their given civilization.
- SWBAT present their information to classmates in a small group.
- SWBAT compare and contrast the civilizations based on the knowledge they gathered.

**Grade Level**

5

**Subject(s)**

- History
- Geography
- Reading

**Time**

Two to four class periods of 45 minutes. Remember that this is an *introduction* to the unit of study on the Maya, Aztec and Inca.

**Prerequisites**

Students should have a basic knowledge of globes and maps. Students should also be able to select reading material at an appropriate reading level.

**Required Materials**

- Many globes so small groups can share
- Copies of appendices for each child
- Copies of appendices on transparency for the teacher
- Pencils
- Crayons, markers or colored pencils (optional)
- Chart paper (optional)
- Overhead and blank transparencies
- 3 – 6 dozen trade books on the Maya, Aztec and Inca at various reading levels – there is limited literature available for the Inca, so gather as much as possible

## **Suggested Procedure**

### *Day 1*

- Tell students they are about to travel to the southern regions of North America and into Central and South America. They will be learning about the ancient peoples of these regions. However, before this study can begin, a basic understanding of the geography of the land is necessary.
- The first day of the lesson will be devoted to locating places and labeling maps. In order to accurately label maps, they will need to first locate these places on a globe and transfer that information to their maps. Students need to complete a map for themselves (Appendix A), but may work in small groups to locate and label these places:
  - Continents: North America, South America, Central America
  - Countries: United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina
  - Water: Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, Amazon River
  - Mountains: The Andes
- Once groups have located and labeled all the places they can, meet as a whole group and check the labeling students have done by labeling a map on the overhead. (At this point, it may be helpful to have students outline continents using different colors. Tracing the Amazon River in blue and drawing “up-side-down Vs” for the Andes is also helpful.) *Do not* have students shade any area because they will later shade the areas inhabited by the Maya, Aztec and Inca.

### *Day 2*

#### *Pre-reading Strategy: Anticipation Guide*

#### *During-reading strategy: Comparison Matrix*

- Begin class by giving each student a blank copy of the map used in the previous lesson (Appendix A). On the board, the overhead or chart paper, display the names of the places for students to label and allow them time to label as many as they can. Once they are finished, have them check their work against the map they made in the previous lesson, completing and fixing as needed. (I have found this to be an enormous help to students who struggle with spatial sense, so I do this every day.)
- Display the transparency of the map prepared in the previous class (you may choose to re-label it as a class also). Point out Mexico, Central America and South America and tell students they will learn about people who lived in these areas.
- Write the names Maya, Aztec and Inca on a transparency, the board or chart paper. Hand out the Anticipation Guide (Appendix B) and have students respond to each statement in the “Before Reading” column with their best guess. Collect these and keep them until the end of the unit.
- Explain that students will work in small groups to read about and gather information on these ancient civilizations. There will be three groups that may be sub-divided based on class size. For example, in a class of 24, there may be two groups of four studying the Maya, two groups for the Aztec and two groups for the Inca. Students should have fun looking at the pictures and reading about these interesting cultures, but should also focus on the following questions:
  - Where did the civilization exist?
  - What year did the civilization “begin”? “End”?
  - Why did the civilization end?
  - What were the religious customs?

- What types of buildings did they have?
- How did the people eat? Did they farm? Hunt? Fish? Use a combination?
- What clothing and adornments did they wear?
- What did they do for fun?
- What jobs did the people have?
- What was the family unit like?
- Give students the Comparison Matrix (Appendix C) with the questions and break them into groups. Once students are in groups, assign each child questions to answer. For example, if there were four students in each group, each child would be responsible for two or three questions. Circulate through the groups to ensure students understand what they are doing and are on task. Once students have found the answers, have them share with the entire group. If a child cannot find an answer, the entire group can work together to find the answer. (It may be helpful, and less confusing, to have copies made and labeled clearly for each child so they know exactly what questions to answer.)
- Students will need the rest of the class to browse and locate information.

### *Day 3*

#### *After-reading Strategy: Revisit Comparison Matrix*

- Have students get into their groups and finish locating information on their civilization. As groups finish, they may want to quiz each other on the information and on their map skill memory.
- Once all groups are done, regroup as a class. The next step to this process is to break into new groups so students can share what they have learned. Each group should have one student from the Maya, Aztec and Inca groups to share their knowledge. In a class of 24, there would be eight groups of three (one Maya ‘expert,’ one Inca ‘expert’ and one Aztec ‘expert’). As students learn information about the other civilizations, they should complete the rest of their Comparison Matrix for the civilizations they did not study. As they do, they should pay close attention to the details and look for similarities and differences between two or all three civilizations.
- Once groups are done sharing, come together as a class and discuss what was learned. Compile the class’s information on an overhead to ensure students are getting the correct information. If they made a mistake, have them cross out the incorrect information and rewrite the correct information (Don’t let them erase because they can go back to the books to see where they misunderstood.)
- Have students get out their maps and label the areas inhabited by the different civilizations. Don’t forget to add a key with the dates the civilization existed. The map also needs a title – decide on one as a class.
- Next, examine and evaluate the information on the Comparison Matrix. Outline any boxes containing information that is similar for two or more civilizations. The civilizations had many things in common, such as religious beliefs in many gods, the study of astronomy, building temples, having priests, etc. If all the similarities were not found, don’t worry, they will be found throughout the unit. Students should save these papers so they can add or change information throughout the unit.
- Give students time to talk with one another about the question at the end of the Comparison Matrix. Once they have had time to talk, give them time to write their response to the question.

### **Differentiation**

- My lesson is based on requirements in the Core Knowledge Sequence. Adaptations may need to be made according to other school and/or state requirements.
- Ensure that trade books are at the independent reading level of students.
- Questions may be changed or altered based on classroom needs.

### **Assessment**

- Maps
- Comparison Matrix
- Anticipation Guide (At the end of the unit, not this lesson because they may not have acquired all the information needed to answer the questions.)

### **Credits**

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Appendix A  
Map

Appendix B  
Anticipation Guide

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer agree (A) or disagree (D) for each statement.

	Before Reading	After Reading	
1.	_____	_____	The Maya, Aztec and Inca believed in many gods instead of just one.
2.	_____	_____	The Aztec were nice people who were friendly to neighboring tribes.
3.	_____	_____	One of these civilizations created an accurate calendar.
4.	_____	_____	The main crop of the Inca was peas.
5.	_____	_____	The Maya invented the wheel and used carts pulled by horses to travel.
6.	_____	_____	The Inca built a series of roads and bridges to travel through the mountains.
7.	_____	_____	The Maya, Aztec and Inca lived during the same time and were all good friends.
8.	_____	_____	The Aztec practiced human sacrifice and cannibalism.
9.	_____	_____	The Maya believed flat foreheads were fashionable, so they tied boards to their babies' heads to make them flat.
10.	_____	_____	The Maya, Aztec and Inca were all conquered and destroyed by the Spanish.

Appendix C  
Comparison Matrix

QUESTION	MAYA	AZTEC	INCA
Where did the civilization exist?			
What year did the civilization begin? End?			
Why did the civilization end?			

<p>What were the religious customs?</p>			
<p>What types of buildings did they have?</p>			
<p>How did the people eat? Did they farm? Hunt? Fish? Use a combination?</p>			

What clothing and adornments did they wear?			
What did they do for fun?			
What jobs did the people have?			

What was the family unit like?			
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**\*\*Complete after discussion on Comparison Matrix and talk with classmates.\*\***

The Maya, Aztec and Inca were three different civilizations that had many things in common. Looking at your map and using the information gathered in class, why do you think there were similarities between the Maya, Aztec and Inca?