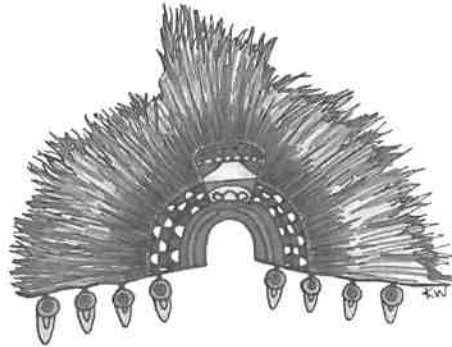


Name _____
Social Studies

Date _____
First Empires

Empires of the Americas

aim: Were pre-Columbian peoples civilized?



DO NOW:

Describe two characteristics of a civilization and give an example of each. (2-3 sentences)

A large, rounded rectangular box with a dashed border, containing five horizontal lines for writing.

Native Americans in Mexico and in Central and South America built large empires. Among them were the empires of the Mayas, Aztecs and Incas.

Directions: Read the following passage on the Mayas, Incas, and Aztecs and complete the graphic organizer.

The Ancient Maya Empire

The Ancient Mayas lived in the Yucatan around 2600 BCE. Today, this area is southern Mexico, Guatemala, northern Belize and western Honduras. By 250 CE, the ancient Maya were at the peak of their power.

The Maya had no central king ruling their huge empire. Instead, there were as many as 20 separate areas, similar to ancient Greece's city-states. Each major city had its own ruler and noble class supported by smaller cities and the surrounding farms and villages.

The Ancient Maya developed the science of astronomy, calendar systems, and hieroglyphic writing. They were also known for creating elaborate ceremonial architecture, such as pyramids, temples, palaces, and observatories. These structures were all built without metal tools.

The Mayan people were also skilled farmers. In order to farm, they had to clear huge sections of tropical rain forests. Groundwater was scarce in these areas, so they had to build large underground reservoirs to store the rainwater.

The Maya were also skilled weavers and potters. They also cleared routes through jungles and swamps to create trade routes. This allowed them to sell and trade the goods they had made for goods they needed.

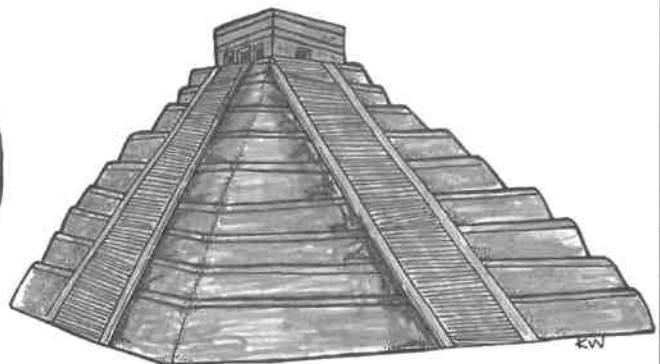
The Maya writing system was made up of 800 glyphs. Some of these glyphs were pictures and others represented sounds. They chiseled the glyphs into stone inside codices. Codices were books that were folded like an accordion. The pages were fig covered in white lime and bound in jaguar skins. The Maya wrote hundreds of these books. They contained information on history, medicine, astronomy, and their religion. The Spanish missionaries burned all but four of these books when they conquered the Maya.

The Ancient Mayans were very religious people. Mayan actions were based on rituals and ceremonies. The Maya had many different gods. They also had rituals. One of those rituals was human sacrifice. The Mayan kings were considered to be direct descendants of the Mayan gods. Mayan religion was divided into three parts with earth as one part, the level above the earth as the other part, and the level below the earth as the third part. The level above the earth was like the Christian heaven and the level below the earth was like the Christian hell.

The Ancient Maya had a class society. At the top were the nobles and priests. Their middle class was made up of warriors, craftsmen and traders. The farmers, workers, and slaves were at the bottom.

The Mayas wove beautiful fabrics and designed musical instruments like horns, drums, and castanets. They also carve huge statues. Archeologists can tell a great deal about the ancient Maya from their wonderful pottery & clay figures. The art they created honored their leaders, gods, and their daily life.

About CE 300 to 900, the major centers of the Mayan civilization were Palenque, Tikal, and Copan. Something happened, & these places were mysteriously abandoned. Many theories have been considered such as disease, invasion by another culture, natural disaster or collapse of their trade routes which would have destroyed their economy. No one knows for sure what happened.



The Ancient Aztec Empire

"Aztec" refers exclusively to the people of Tenochtitlan, situated on an island in Lake Texcoco – from when the first ruler, Acamapichtli (1376-1396) guided early construction of the city through the last and 11th ruler, Cuauhtémoc (1520-1525), who was governing when the Spanish destroyed Tenochtitlan and the Aztec empire ended.

Several types of money were in regular use; small purchases were made with cacao beans and larger purchases were made with cotton cloth called *guachtli*.

Parents taught children responsibility, citizenship, and life-skills – harsh punishments were handed out if a child disobeyed – children of noble classes attended *calmecac* (school) and the workers' children attended *telpochcalli* and were taught occupational skills, warfare, history, good citizenship, and religion. Girls were only trained for marriage.

Maize (yellow corn) was the main food source along with avocados, tomatoes, tamales, tortillas, vegetables, beans, corn, chili peppers, squash, and chocolate.

Children taught *tlachtli* – a ball game for teams much like a combination of basketball and soccer, and *patolli* – gambling game played with dried beans and pebbles.

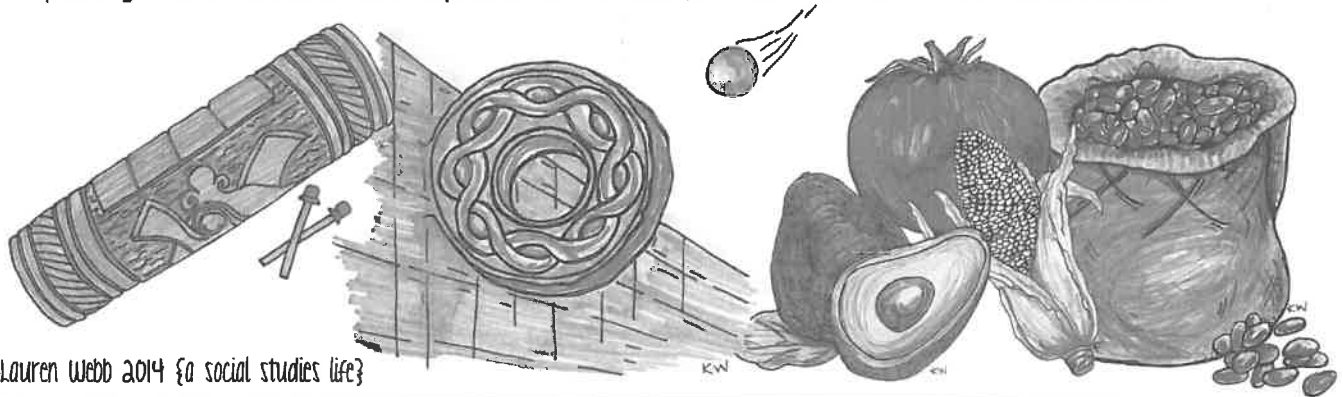
Harsh laws maintained order where the emperor would act as judge and citizens would act as a jury.

N'ahuatl was a system of hundreds of pictures that created an alphabet and scribes and priests were the only ones who could write.

War was a big part of the culture and all boys were trained to fight.

Aztecs used two different calendars. One measured time, while the other was used to fix religious festivals.

Religion was a very important part of Aztec life and music was a huge part of religious ceremonies (and story-telling) – the instruments they used were shells, rattles, whistles, horns, bells, and drums.



The Ancient Inca Empire

The Inca Empire existed in Peru. It ran along the Pacific coast and Andean highlands from the northern border of what is today called Ecuador to the Maule River in Chile. There were over a million people who were Inca.

The man who established the Inca Empire was Manco Capac in 1438. Manco Capac declared himself Sapa Inca, divine son of the Sun. He was a skilled warrior and leader who exercised absolute power. Most historians agree there were thirteen emperors during the time when the Inca Empire existed. They were sometimes called, "The Inca."

The Inca originated in the village of Pagari-tampu, about 15 miles south of Cuzco. Their official language was Quecha. The Incas had no written language. They kept their history and stories alive through stories that were passed from father to son.

The Ancient Inca had skills in music, textiles, wood and stone carving, art, and poetry. The Inca were also highly skilled in working with all types of metals. Their pottery was simple, practical, and beautiful. The Ancient Incas grew corn, potatoes, coffee, and other grains, and created woven baskets and woodwind instruments.

The Inca pyramids were built with mud bricks of clay that were mixed with dry straw from the corn plant. When the Incas found a pyramid that had been built by another culture, they would build their own Inca temple on top of it. Inca gold was not inherited by a person's descendants, so when someone died, the gold was placed inside the grave.

The Incas worshipped many gods and goddesses. The major Incan god was the god of nature, Viracocha, the Creator. Another god was Inti, the Sun god. Gold was the symbol of Inti. The sun god temple is the most important structure in Cuzco, the major city of the Incas. The Incas believed Inti was the father of Incan rulers. They worshipped the ruler as a living god. Major Incan goddesses included those of the earth and the sea. The Incas also worshipped many lesser gods and goddesses. These included the gods of the moon, thunder, rain, stars, and rainbows.

The Ancient Incas developed important medical practices. They performed surgery on human skulls and used anesthesia during surgery. Inca medicine included treating physical and emotional problems.

In 1532, the Spanish arrived in Peru. By 1535, the Inca Empire was gone.



Mayans

Religion

Language

Government

Laws

Achievements

Food

Aztecs

Religion

Language

Government

Laws

Achievements

Food

Incas

Religion

Language

Government

Laws

Achievements

Food

Directions: Using your graphic organizers, compare and contrast the Ancient Empires of the Maya, Inca, and Aztec. You may use bullets!

