

SECTION
3

Reading for Understanding

▶ Key Ideas

BEFORE, YOU LEARNED

Latin America contains a wide variety of landforms, climates, and vegetation.

NOW YOU WILL LEARN

People adapted to these challenging geographic and climatic conditions and developed great civilizations.

▶ Vocabulary

TERMS & NAMES

Olmec an early civilization along the Gulf Coast of what is now southern Mexico

Maya an early civilization located in what is now the Yucatán Peninsula, Guatemala, and northern Belize

cultural hearth the heartland, or place of origin, of a major culture

glyph a carved or engraved symbol that stands for a syllable or a word

empire a political system in which people or lands are controlled by one ruler

Aztec an early civilization in the Valley of Mexico

chinampas artificial islands used for farming

Inca an early civilization in the Andes Mountains of Peru

REVIEW

culture the shared attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors of a group

BACKGROUND VOCABULARY


jaguar a large cat mainly found in Central and South America



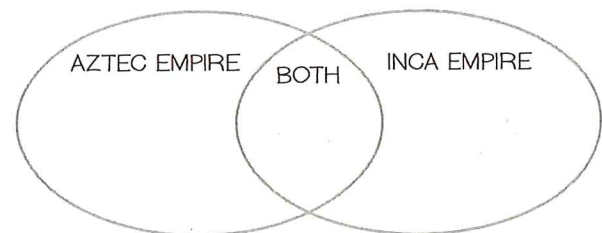
Visual Vocabulary glyph

▶ Reading Strategy

Re-create the Venn diagram shown at right. As you read and respond to the **KEY QUESTIONS**, use the diagram to show how the Aztec and Inca empires were alike and different.

 Skillbuilder Handbook, page R9

COMPARE AND CONTRAST



GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Go to Interactive Review @ ClassZone.com

Ancient Civilizations

Connecting to Your World

How do you think the stone head pictured here was made? An ancient civilization in Latin America carved these heads about 3,000 years ago. What do you think of when you hear the word *pyramid*? Most likely, you think of the pyramids built about 4,500 years ago by the ancient Egyptians. Did you know that ancient civilizations in Latin America, such as the Maya, constructed these huge structures too? As you read this section, you will find out more about the Maya and other early civilizations that thrived in what is now Latin America.



Olmec Head The Olmec carved these large heads from a stone called basalt.

The Olmec and the Maya

▼ **KEY QUESTION** How were the Olmec and Mayan civilizations alike?

The first known civilization to develop in Latin America were the **Olmec**. They lived along the Gulf Coast of what is now southern Mexico about 3,200 years ago. Another civilization, the **Maya**, developed in the highlands and flatlands of what is now the Yucatán Peninsula, Guatemala, and northern Belize. Archaeological evidence shows that these two cultures built well-laid-out cities and complex civilizations. They were farmers, artists, and architects.

The Tikal Pyramid

The Maya built this pyramid in the rain forest of what is now Guatemala.



The Olmec, a Cultural Hearth The Olmec were traders and skilled farmers. As farming began to thrive, the Olmec could count on a steady food supply. Having enough food led to a larger population and allowed the Olmec to focus on tasks other than farming. An adequate food supply also led to the growth of cities.

Olmec cities included plazas, housing areas, and ceremonial centers. Their oldest known city is San Lorenzo. The Olmec are known for their huge stone sculptures of heads. Some sculptures show a half-human, half-animal **jaguar**, the Olmec's chief god.

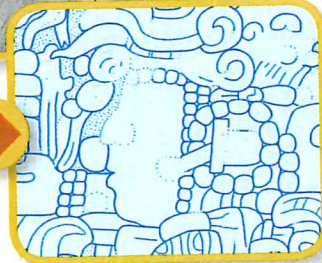
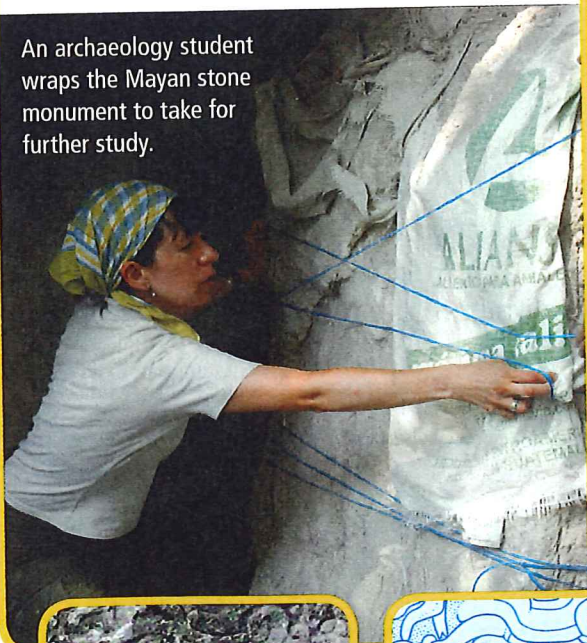
The Olmec began to abandon their cities beginning around 600 B.C. for unknown reasons. However, historians consider the Olmec civilization a **cultural hearth**, the place of origin of a major **culture**. The Olmec culture shaped other cultures in the region, particularly the Maya.

CONNECT History to Today

A Recent Maya Discovery

In 2005, archaeologists working in Guatemala at the site of an ancient Mayan city made an exciting discovery—a stone monument with the carving of a woman's face. The carving dates back to around the A.D. 500s, making it the earliest known likeness of a woman that the Maya carved in stone. This is significant because it suggests that women had important leadership roles in Mayan society early on in Mayan history.

An archaeology student wraps the Mayan stone monument to take for further study.



The Maya, Masters of the City The Maya lived in villages in southern Mexico and northern Central America as early as 1500 B.C. At the height of their civilization, around A.D. 250, the Maya built impressive cities with stone temples, pyramids, plazas, palaces, and ball courts. They were farmers and traders. Corn, beans, and squash were important crops. The Maya also traded salt, chocolate, and cotton with other cultures.

The Maya were advanced in their knowledge of science and technology. They created a 365-day calendar by watching the stars. The calendar identified events throughout the year, such as planting times and holidays. The Maya used a mathematical system based on the number 20 and were the first people to use the zero. They also developed **glyph** writing, carved symbols that stood for a syllable or a word.

In about A.D. 900, the Maya started abandoning their cities, like the Olmec had done earlier. The reasons remain unclear. However, descendants of the Maya still live in the region today.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Explain how the Olmec and Mayan civilizations were alike and different.

Stone Carving

The drawing (right) helps to more clearly see what is carved in part of the stone monument.

Olmec, Maya, Aztec, and Inca

 [Click here](#) to explore these ancient civilizations @ [ClassZone.com](#)

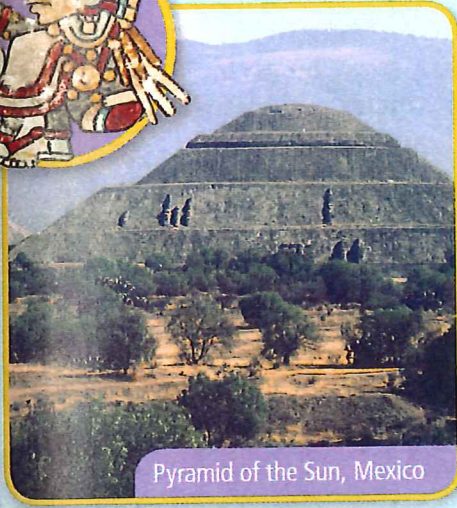
ATLANTIC OCEAN

Tropic of Cancer

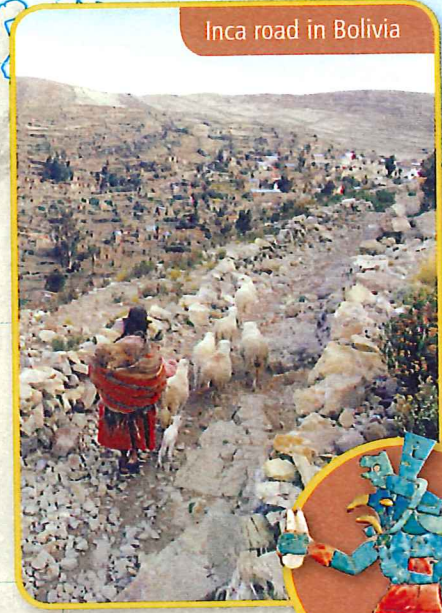


20°N

Caribbean Sea







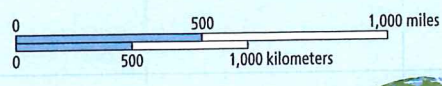
Pyramid of the Sun, Mexico



Inca road in Bolivia



-  Olmec 1200 B.C.–600 B.C.
-  Maya A.D. 250–A.D. 900
-  Aztec A.D. 1200–A.D. 1521
-  Inca A.D. 1438–A.D. 1533



CONNECT Geography & History

READING A THEMATIC MAP

Thematic maps focus on specific types of information. When reading this thematic map, use

- the title to find out what civilizations are featured in the map
- the key to identify what civilization the colors and symbols stand for

Place What civilization occupied the Yucatán Peninsula?

100°W

90°W

80°W

70°W

60°W

The Aztec and the Inca

KEY QUESTION How did the Aztec and the Inca use their environments to develop their empires?

Two great civilizations, the Aztec and the Inca, developed vast **empires**, political systems in which people or lands are controlled by one ruler. Both civilizations were very powerful in their regions until the Spanish conquered them in the 1500s.

The Aztec, a Military Culture The **Aztec** moved from northern Mexico into the Valley of Mexico and what is now Mexico City in about the A.D. 1300s. They took control of the valley in about 1428 and ruled their empire until 1521. The Aztec built a strong military empire through warfare and by collecting tribute—money, goods, or crops—from the people they defeated.

The Aztec built Tenochtitlán (teh•NOHCH•tee•TLAHN), their capital city, on an island in Lake Texcoco. The city included houses and causeways, or roads made of earth. At its height, the population reached around 300,000. A great pyramid dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, the sun and war god, stood in the center of the city. The Aztec used the watery environment around Tenochtitlán to create **chinampas**, or island gardens, to grow food and flowers.

ONLINE PRIMARY SOURCE To read more legends of the Aztec and Inca, go to Research & Writing Center@ClassZone.com

ANALYZING Primary Sources

The Eagle on the Prickly Pear Why would the Aztec build a city in the middle of a swampy lake? According to legend, one of their gods predicted that they would see a prickly pear cactus with an eagle sitting on top of it. The Aztec wandered until they saw this sign. There they built Tenochtitlán, which is now Mexico City.

[A]s they passed through the reeds, there in front of them was the prickly pear with the eagle perched on top, . . . his claws punching holes in his prey. When he saw the Mexicans in the distance, he bowed to them. . . . The . . . spirit said, 'Mexicans, this is the place.' And with that they all wept. 'We are favored,' they said. 'We are blessed. We have seen where our city will be. Now let us go rest.'

Source: *The Eagle on the Prickly Pear*, retold by John Bierhorst

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

How did the Aztec know where to stop to build their capital city?




Inca, Mountain Empire The **Inca** lived in the Andes Mountains in what is now Peru. They controlled a large empire from the early 1400s until 1533. The empire centered around Cuzco (KOOZ•koh), the Inca's mountain capital city. By 1500, the empire extended about 2,500 miles along the west coast of South America. The Inca built complex cities such as Machu Picchu. To farm the steep land, they cut terraces into the mountainsides, where they grew corn and potatoes. They built aqueducts, or canals, to irrigate the land. On higher areas, the Inca grazed llamas.

The Inca adapted to difficult conditions. They built 14,000 miles of roads on which runners carried messages. To keep records, they used *quipus* (KEE•poos), counting tools of knotted cords. Today's descendants of the Inca, the Quechua (KEHCH•wuh), make up about 45 percent of Peru's population. They still use terraces and aqueducts, raise corn and potatoes, and graze llamas.



Machu Picchu Flowers grow on the slopes of Machu Picchu today.

 **SYNTHESIZE** Describe how the Inca changed their environment to develop an empire.

Section 3 Assessment



ONLINE QUIZ

For test practice, go to
Interactive Review
@ClassZone.com

TERMS & NAMES

1. Explain the importance of

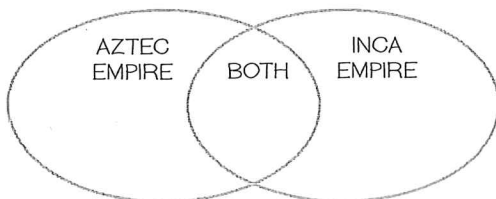
- Olmec
- Maya
- Aztec
- Inca

USE YOUR READING NOTES

2. Compare and Contrast

Use your completed Venn diagram to answer the following question:

How were the ways the Aztec and Inca modified their environments similar?



KEY IDEAS

3. What are the earliest known civilizations in what is now southern Mexico?
4. How did the Aztec build their large empire?
5. How were the Inca able to communicate throughout their large empire?

CRITICAL THINKING

6. **Compare and Contrast** How was the decline of the Mayan and Olmec civilizations different from the decline of the Aztec and Inca civilizations?
7. **Identify Problems and Solutions** What problems might an empire have in ruling millions of people?
8. **CONNECT to Today** Each year, around 300,000 people visit Machu Picchu. What problems do you think this presents for this archaeological site? Explain.
9. **WRITING Write a Newspaper Article** Imagine that you are a reporter visiting a city in one of the early Latin American civilizations. Write a short article that describes the city's architecture.

Animated GEOGRAPHY

Chinampas

[Click here](#) to enter the *chinampas* @ [ClassZone.com](#)

ISLAND GARDENS

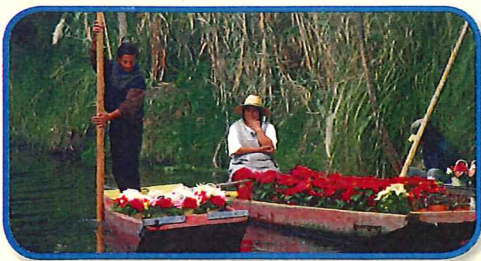
Much of the land around Tenochtitlán, where the Aztec settled, was swampy, posing a challenge for farming. The Aztec were resourceful at adapting to their environment. They built *chinampas*, human-made islands created for planting. The rich soil allowed the Aztec to grow crops and flowers.



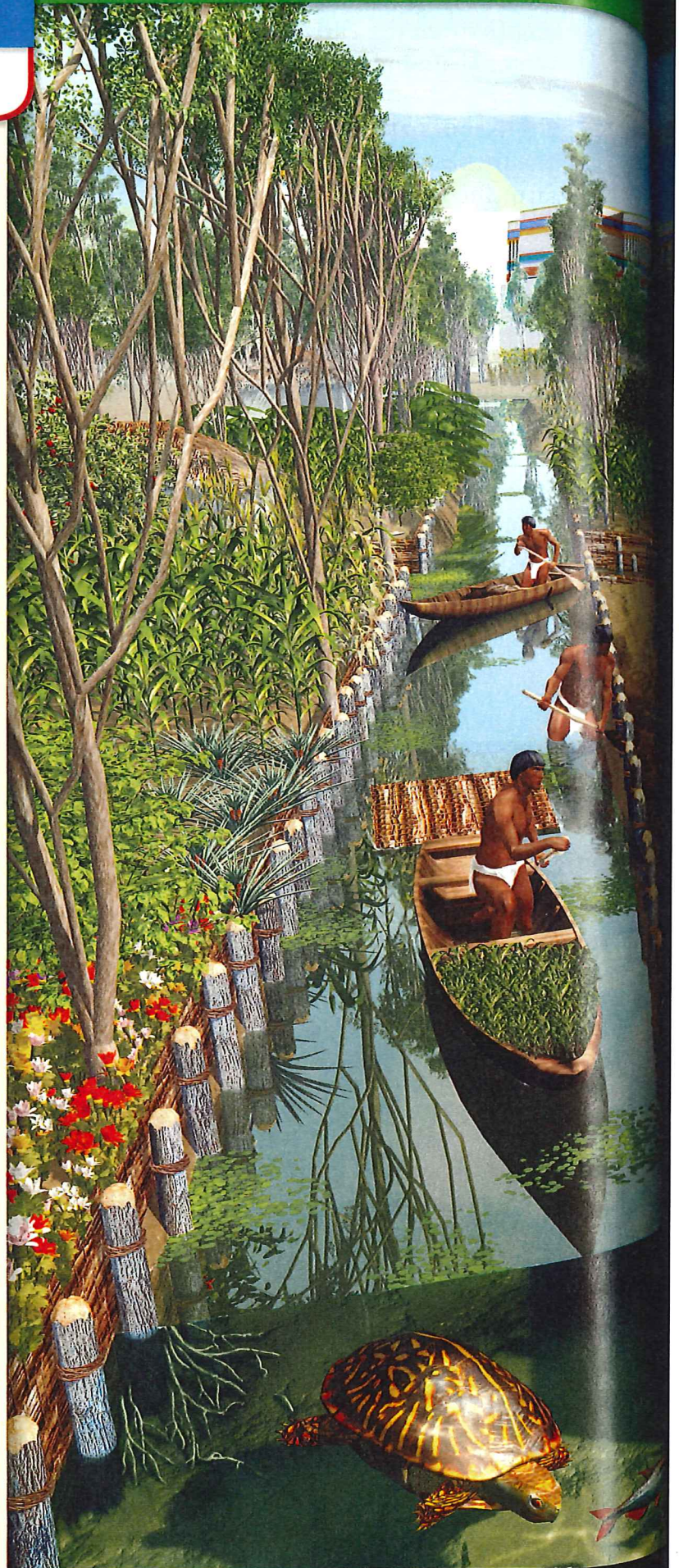
[Click here](#) to see how the Aztec built the *chinampas*. Learn how the Aztec used woven mats and mud from the lake to build the *chinampas*.



[Click here](#) to see how the Aztec lived on the *chinampas*. Learn where they lived, what they wore, and what they ate.



[Click here](#) to see how *chinampas* are used today and the problems they face.



Tenochtitlán



Valley
of
Mexico

Lake
Texcoco

Tenochtitlán

Causeways

Chinampas

GeoActivity

Make a Model Work with a partner to create a small model of a *chinampa*. Apply what you have learned about how the Aztec built *chinampas* to make a model using materials similar to those the Aztec used.