

Aztec, Maya, Inca

Fun Projects for World History

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History, Language Arts, Art - Aztec, Maya & Inca

GENERAL OVERVIEW

This collection of nine enrichment activities was designed to complement existing curricula and expand one's understanding of the ancient Aztec, Maya, and Inca. Studies have confirmed that using our hands helps us retain information. So, if you are looking for creative and simple, yet stimulating and exciting projects to spark learning, take the next step toward a highly engaging encounter.

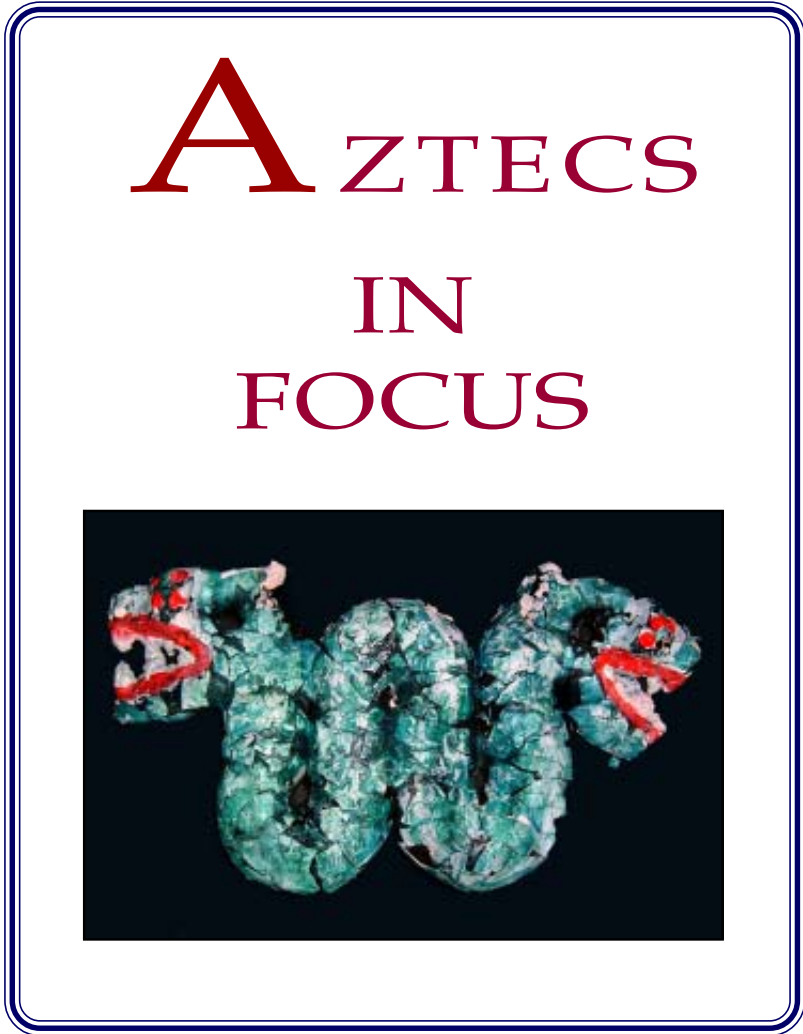
There is truly nothing more stimulating than combining a hands-on activity with a subject being studied. Regardless of a learner's age, learning by doing will help maintain their interest, improve retention of information, and foster a desire to learn now and in the future.

In this collection, there are a total of nine hands-on projects and writing activities. To enhance the complete learning experience using this collection, character and setting development statements as well as extensive vocabulary lists are provided. A general materials list, detailed instructions, and extensive activity suggestions are provided for the nine projects that focus on the collection theme.

As an educator with 18 plus years of teaching and product development experience, it is my personal goal to encourage young people to be creative. Each of the activities included in this collection are based on actual artifacts representative of the ancient Aztec, Maya, and Inca. A conscious effort was made to develop activities that are constructed from readily available materials, yet result in stunning end products. Although having a wonderful end product is desirable, an essential part of learning is the process of creating something. A young person will gain a greater appreciation for the skills required by the ancient Aztec, Maya, and Inca when they accomplish an activity.

It is my heartfelt desire that both teacher and student will find the nine activities in this book a wonderful journey of creativity. Jean Henrich

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History Ancient Aztecs

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AZTECS IN FOCUS

The Aztec Empire ruled for hundreds of years until it was invaded by Spanish conquistadors. At the height of this empire, the Aztecs controlled a vast region stretching from the central region of Mexico to the Gulf of Mexico and south to Guatemala.

The capital of the Aztec Empire was Tenochtitlán. It is believed by historians that Tenochtitlán was the largest city of its kind in existence. The city was massive and featured amazing architecture including a great temple complex, canal system, and royal palace. It was the home for merchants, artists and craft people, farmers, hunters, warriors, and priests.



The word *Aztec* refers to all people who speak the Nahuatl language and resided in the Valley of Mexico at the time of the Spanish conquest. Originally the Aztecs called themselves Mexica or Tenochca. Today the name Mexico comes from the ancient word Mexica.



Sometime around 1325, the wandering people of the original Aztecs established the city of Tenochtitlán which is Mexico City today. The Aztecs became renowned as fierce fighters and builders. They also developed and maintained a successful agricultural economy, established a trade network, controlled and extracted tribute from territories they controlled, practiced elaborate religious rites and ceremonies, and ran an effective government system.

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AZTECS IN FOCUS



Although many associate the Aztecs as primarily a warring society, they were very skilled in the arts. Among the talents demonstrated by the Aztec people were inscription, stonework, pottery, and feather work.

The temples and other buildings that are still visible today were created by stoneworkers who not only constructed these architectural wonders, but also carved statues, and fashioned beautiful objects from jade, obsidian, and even crystal. Their tools were simple - often made only from bone, rock, or wood - but what they were able to accomplish was staggering.

Like the ancient Egyptians, the Aztecs recorded their events using hieroglyphics or pictograms. Scribes would sketch out a pictogram which they would then color with pigments made from minerals, shells, insects, and vegetables.

There were hundreds of different symbols. Aztec writing was usually done by a priest or scribe. They wrote about their history and religious events, and they composed poetry. The Aztec books were called *codices*. Long strips of paper were fan-folded. Each end of the *codice* was covered with a piece of wood. Writings were on both sides of the paper. It was read from top to bottom and from left to right. *Codices* measured approximately 8 inches by 20 inches and were made from tree bark or treated deerskin.



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AZTECS IN FOCUS

Aztec potters formed their vessels by hand. They did not utilize a potter's wheel. Pots were embellished with both painted and carved designs. Sometimes the vessels took the shapes of people or animals. They would add pieces of shell and jade to the exteriors. Many of the decorations were abstract patterns which were used to decorate both the interior and exterior of the container.

Feather workers took the plumage from colorful birds found in the rainforests. Bright tropical feathers were made into fans, shields, complete suits, and headdresses. The feathers came from turkeys and ducks as well as the bright emerald green quetzal. They even made feather mosaics.



The Aztecs enjoyed music and dance. They had a wide variety of instruments including shells, whistles, rattles, trumpets, and flutes. Music and dance were often part of religious ceremonies. Children between the ages of 12 to 15 were taught in how to play musical instruments, sing and dance. An Aztec band was made up of different rattles and drums. Some of the drums used in temples were so large and loud they could be heard from miles away.

All aspects of Aztec life were challenging and so were their games. *Tlachtli* and *patolli* were two different games enjoyed by the Aztecs. *Tlachtli* was a ball game that involved two teams using rubber balls on a court. Vertical hoops were positioned high overhead. One player on each team would attempt to make a "hoop" by using only his knees to kick the ball. Hoops were positioned on opposite walls midway down the court. This was like soccer-basketball. The team that managed to get their ball into the hoop first won the game.

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AZTEC WRITING RECIPE

DIRECTIONS: Follow the steps listed at the bottom of this page in order. Use the words provided under the different categories to help you write your paragraph. If you would like, add your own words to the categories. If appropriate, you may use more than one word from each column. Additional character development statements and details for characterization can be found on pages 119 - 125.

POSITION IN SOCIETY

Macehualli (warrior-farmer)
Member of a clan
Noble
Chieftain
Whitewasher
Mason

HAIR

Coarse
Dark
Abundant
Scarce body and facial hair
Beardless
Bangs
Long
Braided
Decorated with eagle

BODY

Short
Thick set
Long arms
Broad feet
Inclined to be pigeon-toed
High foot arches

FACIAL FEATURES

Jet-black eyes
Almond shaped eyes
Hooked nose
Dark to light brown coloring
Pierced ears
Broad-headed

CLOTHING

Simple
Maxtli (loincloth)
Tilmantli (mantle)
Sandals
Gold sandals
Embroidered underskirt
Huipil (poncho-like dress)

EXPRESSIONS

Fierce
Confident
Happy
Contented
Worried
Tired

STEPS

1. Indent and write one sentence introducing your character by name and occupation. (Use your own words for this step.)
2. Write one or more sentences describing his/her position in society.
3. Write several sentences describing his/her body.
4. Write one or more sentences describing his/her clothing.
5. Write one or more sentences describing his/her hair.
6. Write several sentences describing his/her facial features.
7. Write one or more sentences describing his/her expression.