



#3567

THE AZTECS

Grade Levels: 9-12

25 minutes

AMBROSE VIDEO PUBLISHING 1998

1 Student Activity Sheet

DESCRIPTION

Aztec civilization flourished in Mexico for three centuries before Cortez and his Spanish conquistadors defeated them in 1521. Reviews the history of an empire built on trade, tribute, and terrorism, emphasizing the worship of the sun god, blood sacrifice, and their warrior philosophy. Describes the steps to becoming a warrior, a typical battle, and the prisoners' fates. Cortez, hailed initially as a god, fled the capital but left smallpox behind. Decimated by the disease, the Aztec empire fell.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: World History

- ◆ Standard: Understands the expansion of states and civilizations in the Americas between 1000 and 1500
 - Benchmark: Understands political, social, and economic features of Aztec society (e.g., the locations and geographic limits of different phases of the Aztec empire, the role and status of women in Aztec society and how this compares to the Incan and Mayan societies, the complex structure and features of the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan)
 - Benchmark: Understands social and cultural features of Aztec society (e.g., the characteristics of Tenochtitlan that made it a unique city, gender roles in Aztec society and what these indicate about Aztec culture)
 - Benchmark: Understands the similarities and differences between Incan and Aztec society (e.g., the essential differences between Aztec and Incan government, economy, religion, and social organization; how Incan and Aztec art and architecture reveal cultural achievements in their societies)
 - Benchmark: Understands how the Aztec empire arose in the 14th century (e.g., major aspects of Aztec government, society, religion and culture; the construction of Tenochtitlan, the "Foundation of Heaven")

Subject Area: World History

- ◆ Standard: Understands major global trends from 1000 to 1500 CE

- Benchmark: Understands differences and similarities between the Inca and Aztec empires and empires of Afro-Eurasia (e.g., political institutions, warfare, social organizations, cultural achievements)

Subject Area: World History

- ◆ Standard: Understands how the transoceanic interlinking of all major regions of the world between 1450 and 1600 led to global transformations
 - Benchmark: Understands features of Spanish exploration and conquest (e.g., why the Spanish wanted to invade the Incan and Aztec empires, and why these empires collapsed after the conflict with the Spanish; interaction between the Spanish and indigenous populations such as the Inca and the Aztec; different perspectives on Cortes' journey into Mexico)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

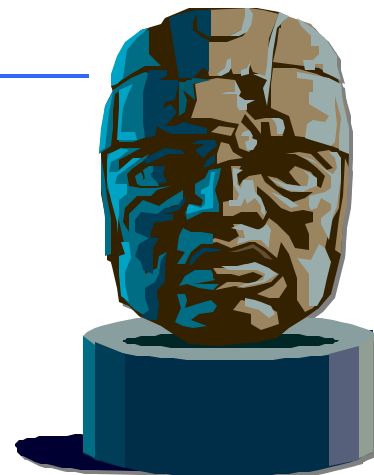
1. To depict how and why Cortes led Spanish conquest of the Aztecs in the 1500s.
2. To examine Aztec society including religious beliefs, social practices, warring nature, economy and achievements.
3. To illustrate the Aztec's fall to the Spanish conquistadors led by Cortes.

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. conquistador | 10. incessantly |
| 2. diabolical | 11. effigies |
| 3. orgy of sacrifice | 12. stalked |
| 4. torso | 13. frenzy |
| 5. obsidian | 14. fury |
| 6. venture | 15. onslaught |
| 7. campaign (of war) | 16. jubilant |
| 8. insatiable | 17. hostage |
| 9. tribute | |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Discuss the Spanish conquistadors.
 - a. What was their purpose in sailing to the Americas?
 - b. How did Columbus influence the Spaniards?
2. Locate the following places on a map of the world.
 - a. Spain
 - b. Gulf of Mexico
 - c. Mexico: Lake Texcoco, Tenochtitlan
 - d. Pacific Ocean



AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss the Spanish conquistadors' first impression of the Incas.
 - a. Why did they initially fear no evil?
 - b. Why did their initial ride into the city seem like a dream?
 - c. What was impressive about Aztec civilization?
2. Discuss the Spaniards' later view of the Aztecs.
 - a. How was the Aztec temple stained with infamy?
 - b. How did the Spanish become revolted by their hosts?
3. Discuss Aztec civilization.
 - a. How did the Aztecs rule an empire based on trade, tribute and terror?
 - b. What remarkable achievements had Aztec civilization made in 200 years?
 - c. How did the Aztecs build their capital over the marshes?
 - d. How did the Aztecs grow rich without natural wealth?
4. Discuss Aztec religious beliefs.
 - a. Immediately after his birth how was an Aztec boy presented to the gods?
 - b. Who was Uitzilopochtli?
 - (1) How was Uitzilopochtli the model for every warrior?
 - (2) Why did Uitzilopochtli crave "precious water"?
 - (3) Why was the sun the symbol of Uitzilopochtli?
 - c. Who was Quetzalcoatl?
 - (1) Where did this legend originate?
 - (2) What advantage did this god give the Spaniards?
5. Discuss the Aztec's warring nature.
 - a. Why did the Aztecs believe that war must always continue?
 - b. Why did warriors and youths sing and dance daily?
 - c. What happened to a slain warrior?
 - d. What opened the way to noble rank and untold wealth?
 - e. What happened to a man who did not shine in battle?
 - f. How did Aztec warriors enter their enemies' land?
 - g. How did elite and skilled warriors stand out in battle?
 - h. What were the knights of the eagle and the jaguar?
6. Discuss Moctezuma's conflict with the Mixtecs.
 - a. What were the Aztecs doing in a Mixtec city?
 - b. What caused Moctezuma to vow revenge on the Mixtecs?



- c. What did the Aztec retinue to battle look like?
 - d. What were the ritual performances common in battle?
 - e. How did the Aztecs triumph?
 - f. What terms did Moctezuma dictate upon conquering the Mixtecs?
 - g. What was the fate of the Mixtec captives?
 - h. How were the captors involved in human sacrifice?
7. Discuss how Aztec warriors were trained.
- a. What did a boy leaving childhood learn in a house of youth to prepare him to be a warrior?
 - b. At age 15, what tools of his profession did a male learn?
 - c. What was a boy allowed to do at age 18?
 - d. What test must a young warrior pass?
 - e. How did a young warrior earn privilege and rank?
8. Discuss the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs.
- a. Why did the Aztecs initially think that the Spaniards might be gods?
 - b. Why did the Spaniards feel righteous in their cause against the Aztecs?
 - c. How did the Aztecs reap the hate they had sown?
 - d. Which side won initially?
 - e. What led to the Spanish retreat?
 - f. What weapon the conquistadors left behind defeated the Aztecs?

Applications and Activities

1. Analyze the Aztec writings depicted in the video. (See STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET.)
 - a. Who wrote these pieces?
 - b. What do these pieces explain about Aztec culture and values?
 - c. What kinds of pieces might be more representative of another culture?
2. Research the modern descendants of the Aztec people.
 - a. How do these people feel about their ancestors?
 - b. What differences are there in the way they remember the Spanish conquest?
3. Imagine discovering or being discovered by a civilization from outer space.
 - a. How would this encounter compare to the interaction between the conquistadors and the Aztecs?
 - b. What aspect of the alien culture might lead to a righteous desire to conquer or exterminate?
 - c. What size of a city would be beyond comparison?
4. Investigate human sacrifice.
 - a. Debate the following statements.
 - (1) Cultural differences must always be respected.
 - (2) Some things are simply wrong regardless of cultural beliefs.
 - b. List cultures that currently and historically have practiced human sacrifice.



5. Research cultural celebrations related to children being born. Consider Jewish circumcision and Catholic baptism.
6. Research and compare current and historic warring groups to the Aztecs. Consider modern street gangs, the Nazis and Japanese World War II kamikaze pilots.
7. Role-play a war crime trial of Cortes and Moctezuma. Consider crimes done against the Spaniards, the Aztecs and other indigenous peoples.
8. Debate if the Spanish conquests of the Incas and the Aztecs were similar or different.



RELATED RESOURCES

Captioned Media Program

- The Conquest of the Incas #3593
- Europe Explores the Americas: Southern Voyages and Settlements #3356
- The New World Encountered #3491

World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **CIVILIZATIONS IN HISTORY**

<http://home.echo-on.net/~smithda/>

Includes information regarding Aztec culture, Montezuma II, chocolate and religious sacrifices. Includes information regarding other ancient civilizations and related Aztec links.

- **AZTEC**

<http://home.freeuk.net/elloughton13/aztecs.htm>

This comprehensive site is designed to learn about Aztec civilization. Visually appealing site with a section devoted to teachers, nine informational subtopics for users in English and Spanish, four creative writing prompts and links to a Web ring of Aztec sites. Has a printable booklet that can be used online that asks users to pose as historians, archaeologists and anthropologists.



STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

- Words of the Aztecs and the Spaniards

Words of the Aztecs and Spaniards



Aztec father:

Dear Son,

You must understand that your home is not here where you have been born, for you are a warrior. You are a bird. And this house where you have just been born is only a nest. Your mission is to give the sun the blood of enemies, to drink and to feed the earth with their bodies.



Aztec midwife:

One day he would enter the palace of delights where the brave who die in battle rejoice.



Spanish conquistador:

I'd taken part in many battles but up to that time, when I saw the cruel deaths inflicted on our comrades before our very eyes, I'd never felt such fear.

Aztec citizen after final defeat to the Spaniards via smallpox:

Broken spears line the roads.
We have torn our hair in grief.
The houses are roofless now, and
Their walls are red with blood.
Worms are swarming in the streets and the plazas
And the walls are spattered with gore.
The water has turned red as if it was dyed.
And when we drink it, it has the taste of brine.
We have pounded our hands in despair against the adobe walls,
For our inheritance, our city, is lost and dead.
The shields of our warriors were its defense but they could not save it.

