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The Aztec Civilization: Way of Life

The Aztec were an American Indian people who ruled a mighty empire in Mexico during the 1400's and early 1500's. The Aztec had one of the most advanced civilizations in the Americas. They built cities as large and complex as any in Europe at that time. They also practiced a remarkable religion that affected every part of their lives. The legacy of the Aztec Civilization is seen even today in the culture of modern Mexico.

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Find It!

Use the World Book search tool to find the answers to the questions below. Since this activity is about the Aztec civilization, it is recommended you start by searching the key words "Aztec."
For some questions, fill in the correct term in the blank space to complete the sentence.
For other questions, write a short paragraph answering the question.

Hint: For the following questions, see the Introduction and the section "The Aztec Empire" in the article "Aztec."

1. The name "Aztec" is used to describe what people?

2. The people of the Aztec civilization referred to themselves by the names

   _____; _____ and _____
   in their native language (3 terms).

3. The largest Aztec city was the capital, called _____. This city was built on an island in Lake _____.

4. Where was the Aztec Empire centered?

***Users of the *Advanced* database can find extension activities at the end of this webquest.**

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5. The Aztec emperor was called the _____ _____ (2 words), which means "Great Speaker."

6. The four main social classes in Aztec society were: _____;

   _____; _____ and _____.

7. Describe how the Aztec managed their lands through groups called *calpollis*?

Matching!

The Aztec worshiped many gods and goddesses, each of whom ruled one or more human activities or aspects of nature. Match the Aztec god or goddess from column A with the aspect of nature or activity they were associated with in column B.

Hint: For the following questions, see the section "Way of Life" in the article "Aztec."

Column A	Column B
_____ 8. Huitzilopochtli	A. Goddess of fertility and beauty
_____ 9. Tonatiuh	B. Associated with civilization and learning
_____ 10. Centeotl	C. A corn god
_____ 11. Quetzalcoatl	D. Associated with springtime
_____ 12. Tlaloc	E. A fire god
_____ 13. Mictlantecuhtli	F. The sun god
_____ 14. Ehecatl	G. An all-powerful divinity
_____ 15. Xipe Totec	H. Ruler of the dead
_____ 16. Xiuhtecuhtli	I. God of war
_____ 17. Xochiquetzal	J. God of the wind
_____ 18. Tezcatlipoca	K. A rain and fertility god

Find It!

For the following questions, fill in the correct term in the blank space to complete the sentence. For other questions, write a few sentences or a short paragraph answering the question.

19. What was the purpose of many Aztec religious ceremonies?

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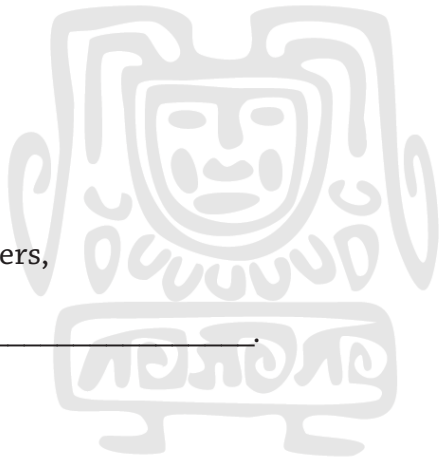
20. Why did the Aztec perform animal and even human sacrifices?



21. Most Aztec religious ceremonies took place in walled ceremonial centers,

    the main structures within these were called _____.

22. Many Aztec ceremonial centers had a playing court called _____

    for a game called_____ that resembled a mixture of soccer and basketball.

23. The Aztec had two different calendars. Describe how they were different.

24. How were the houses of Aztec commoners designed and how were they different from the homes of wealthy Aztec families?

25. Briefly describe the most famous surviving Aztec sculpture. Who's face appears in this?

26. What was the purpose of warfare in the Aztec civilization?

27. The chief weapon of Aztec warriors was a wooden club edged with sharp pieces of volcanic glass,

    called obsidian. This weapon was called a _____ .

See It!

28. In the section "Language" within the World Book article "Aztec," you will find the picture titled "Aztec Writing." Study the picture. What similarities and differences do you see between the Aztec writing and written language today?

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Word Search!

Many of our words for popular foods and other items come from Nahuatl, *the language of the Aztecs. In the puzzle below, find the Aztec words hidden within the puzzle by reading the definitions below. In the Word Search Puzzle below, words may be spelled backwards, forward, or diagonally.*

Hint: For the following questions, see the sections "Food" and "Warfare" as well as the section "The Aztec Heritage" in article "Aztec."

Clues:

1. The Aztec used the juice of maguey plants to make this alcoholic beverage.
2. The principle food of the Aztec was this thin flat corn bread.
3. The Aztec raised this bird for food.
4. Only wealthy Aztec could afford to drink a beverage made with this popular ingredient made from cacao beans.
5. The Aztec gave us the name for this popular food used in ketchup, salads, and pizza sauce.
6. This Aztec food made of a flat cornbread stuffed with meat remains popular today.
7. The Spanish name for the food described in clue #2.
8. We use an Aztec word to describe this green round or pear-shaped fruit.
9. This is the Aztec word for small mud islands made by farmers in shallow lakes to grow crops.
10. The Aztec used this spear-throwing device to increase the range and force of their spears.

T	C	M	S	A	Y	I	A	I	A	R
O	N	H	O	K	L	H	L	V	E	K
R	D	S	I	T	D	L	O	X	M	F
T	C	U	C	N	A	C	T	A	C	O
I	D	O	P	C	A	M	F	K	E	L
L	X	S	X	D	R	M	O	H	O	T
L	F	A	O	R	Y	L	P	T	Z	A
A	L	Y	E	K	R	U	T	A	J	L
T	U	D	R	V	T	W	O	P	S	T
C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E	M	A
K	Q	V	G	J	I	O	K	P	S	B

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Extension Activity 1: Relating to the Past

The Aztec way of life left a lasting mark on the culture of Mexico and some parts of the United States. What aspects of Aztec culture have you experienced? Describe at least two similarities between the Aztec culture and yours today.

Next, describe two aspects of your current culture that you hope will still exist in the world 500 years in the future. Explain your choices.

Extension Activity 2: Compare and Contrast Ancient Pyramids

Within the World Book Aztec article, you will find a picture describing the pyramid of the sun at the ancient city of Teotihuacán, near present-day Mexico City. Other civilizations also built pyramids, the most famous being Ancient Egypt. How is the pyramid at Teotihuacán different from the pyramids of Ancient Egypt? Consider both how they were built and used. Use the World Book search tool to find the answers to this question. Since this activity is about Pyramids, it is recommended you start by searching the key words "Pyramid."

Read more about the Aztec in World Book's eBook collection:

The Aztec. Chicago: World Book, 2013. Early Peoples. *World eBook*. Web. 23 Nov. 2015.
< http://worldbookonline.com/wb/ebooks/mall/instt/catalog/urn:ISBN:978-0-7166-2335-9/detail.do >.

The Aztec. Chicago: World Book, 2014. Native North Americans. *World eBook*. Web. 23 Nov. 2015.
< http://worldbookonline.com/wb/ebooks/mall/instt/catalog/urn:ISBN:978-0-7166-3076-0/detail.do >.

Voyages of Exploration. Chicago: World Book, 2014. A Look At. *World eBook*. Web. 23 Nov. 2015.
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