

Daily Life and Culture Student Page

Introduction:

In this lesson you will study primary sources that provide insight into daily life in the Maya, Aztec, and Inca civilizations. In all of these cultures, goods needed in daily life were made by hand then exchanged within families and communities or in markets. As you study these sources, think about the fact that many individuals had to engage in a variety of specialized activities and then share their work in some way so that the empires could flourish.

Note: All sites in this lesson can be found at
<http://www.socialstudies.com/ancientlinks.html>.

Directions:

Mayan Loom

Go to <http://www.snomnh.ou.edu/collections&research/ethnology/sub/mayan/CAM-2-9-28%20loom%20web.jpg>

Study the image. This simple loom is called a “backstrap loom” because women and girls could tie one end to a tree, place a strap at the other end behind their backs, and so extend their weaving out in front of them anywhere they went.

1. What might the advantages have been of having a portable loom? What conclusions can you draw about daily life among the Maya from the fact that Mayan women and girls used weaving technology they could easily carry anywhere?
2. What materials would women and girls have had to prepare in order to weave fabrics on their looms?
3. Describe the colors and designs on the fabric in this image. Based on your study of the fabric, describe what the Mayans might have considered beautiful in their culture.

Hernan Cortés: from Second Letter to Charles V, 1520

Go to <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1520cortes.html>

You may find these definitions helpful:

“Temixtitlan”—Cortés’s word for Tenochtitlán

“porticoes”—doorways or entryways

“wrought and unwrought stone”—stones that have been shaped, and those that are plain

“apothecaries’ shops”—pharmacies

“braziers”—a pan holding burning coals, or a grill

“maize”—corn

“magistrates”—judges

4. Scroll down to the paragraph that begins, “This city has many public squares...” About how many people traded in the one market Cortés described?

5. What kinds of items were offered for trade in the market?

6. How was the market organized? That is, were all items sold everywhere, or not? Explain.

7. Cortés wrote, “[t]hey sell everything by number or measure; at least so far we have not observed them to sell anything by weight.” What do you think he meant by this?

8. If there was a problem or controversy in the market, how was it resolved?

Sketches of Incan agriculture, Don Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala

Go to <http://www.geocities.com/gabylago99/imagenes/etno/inca8.jpg>

Study the sketch by don Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, a 16th-century Mestizo (mixed Indian and Spanish) author who made over 400 sketches of life in the Incan empire.

10. What are the people in this illustration doing?

Go to <http://www.geocities.com/gabylago99/imagenes/etno/inca1.jpg>.

11. What is beginning to grow around the woman? What is she doing?

Go to <http://www.geocities.com/gabylago99/imagenes/etno/inca10.jpg>.

12. What crop appears to have grown? What is the man at the bottom of the image doing?

13. What is the man at the top of the image doing? Hypothesize two reasons why he may not be working.

Go to <http://www.geocities.com/gabylago99/imagenes/etno/inca2.jpg>

14. What are the people doing? Why might this have been important?

15. Based on your study of these images, write a one-paragraph description of the agricultural cycle of farmers in the Inca empire.