

Unit 16 Aztecs and how can we find out about the Aztec civilisation?

**History
Year 6**

ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children learn about the Aztec civilisation from different sources. Children find out about the characteristic features of the society and period, through research, using available evidence on the World Wide Web, in books, from video, from pictures and from artefacts. Children are asked to note effects of the two cultures (Aztec & Spanish) coming together.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit builds on other units that encourage children to carry out an enquiry based on the use of archaeological evidence, eg Unit 6B 'Why have people invaded and settled in Britain in the past? – An Anglo-Saxon case study'. It focuses on the ways of life in a non-European society in the distant past.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if the children have:

- used chronological conventions, eg *BC, AD, ancient*
- learnt about aspects of life in other periods and societies
- identified different representations of the past
- used artefacts to find out about the past

LINKS WITH OTHER SUBJECTS

- music : Aztec percussion
- art: Aztec glyphs and murals , working on a large scale.
- Literacy; using range and medium term planning from Y6 term 1
- Drama: scenes from Aztec life

VOCABULARY

In this unit, children will have opportunities to use:

- words associated with the passing of time, eg *ancient, BC, AD, century*
- words associated with archaeology and anthropology eg *archaeologist, museum, evidence*
- words associated with the Aztec civilisation, eg *pictograms, ideograms glyphs, temples, causeway etc*

ICT DEVELOPMENT

- multi-tasking Word/Powerpoint and Internet Explorer.
- Combining text & pictures from different sources.
- using 'selected' links to access evidence.
- Use a simulation.

RESOURCES

- maps of the world, Aztec civilisation, Tenochtitlan;
- information on the Aztec civilisation
- information on archaeological evidence
- books
- pictures of artefacts, model artefacts, pictures showing aspects of life, glyphs and documents created around the time of the Spanish conquest

EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

most children will:

make appropriate use of dates and terms, eg *AD, BC, century*; demonstrate factual knowledge and understanding about the everyday lives of men and women in the Aztec civilisation and use it to describe the characteristic features; show how some aspects of the Aztec civilisation have been interpreted in different ways; select and combine information from a range of available sources; communicate their knowledge and understanding of the Aztec civilisation in an organised and structured way

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

recognise some similarities and differences between the Aztec civilisation and other societies or periods they know about; ask and answer questions about the Aztec civilisation by using at least one source of information

some children will have progressed further and will:

use their knowledge and understanding of the Aztec civilisation to make links with other societies and periods; select and combine information from a range of sources to reach conclusions, realising the world wide nature of the resources available to them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN	POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES CHILDREN	POINTS TO NOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the sort of questions that can be answered from studying the documents 	<p>Brainstorm the questions that historians could answer about the Aztec civilisation,</p> <p><i>eg When did they live? Where did they live? What was life like? What were homes like?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask and answer questions about the anthropological discoveries made about the Aztec ask appropriate and relevant questions about the Aztec civilisation 	<p>The questions to be displayed in the front of the topic folder and to be referred to throughout the topic.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use a picture to develop inferences 	<p>What was it like in an Aztec village? Children use artists impression of an Aztec village to list features that a visitor would see. Children should make inferences about materials used in construction etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify activities and structures and hypothesise about materials and functions 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to locate the Aztec civilisation about the environment of the Aztec and how this could have affected settlement patterns and lifestyles 	<p>Where was the Aztec civilisation located? Children show location of Aztec empire and relate this to countries existing today.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> locate places on a world map identify environmental and physical features and how these might affect settlement and lifestyle 	<p>This activity can be linked with Geography topic <i>Where in the world</i>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to use BC and AD appropriately how the Aztec civilisation relates to other historical periods and to the chronology of world history the sort of questions that can be answered from studying the documents 	<p>How long ago was the Aztec civilisation? Where did the Aztecs come from? Who was there before? Their wandering, hunting, farming ancestors who arrived on the shores of Lake Texcoco about AD 1300. The overcrowded land. The Aztec's relationships with other "tribes" Reasons for their rise to power. That their empire fell to the Spanish in 1519. <i>Using the Codex extract showing the Mexicas' journey.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use BC and AD correctly sequence the historical periods they know from the Aztec civilisation to present day talk about key features of past societies and compare them with others 	<p>This activity can be linked with what children have learnt about life in Ancient Greek, Saxon/Viking, Tudor and in Victorian times. This will enable links and connections to be made throughout the unit.</p>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN	POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES CHILDREN	POINTS TO NOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the written evidence of the Aztec civilisation • how people wrote before alphabets 	<p>What sort of written evidence is there of the Aztec civilisation?</p> <p>In pairs or small groups, play a 'Pictionary'-type game, drawing a picture to communicate a word. Discuss the children's drawings, focusing on why they chose to make them simple or complicated, eg <i>Which words were easier to communicate and which words were harder?</i></p> <p>Give the children pictures of glyphs from the Aztec civilisation. Provide a list of questions about the glyphs, eg <i>Why do you think so many glyphs show animals? What do you think glyphs were used for? Who might have used them?</i> Ask the children to use these questions to describe the glyphs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate with each other through pictures • suggest how glyphs could be translated • write about how the Aztec civilisation used pictures and suggest the reasons why 	<p>Referring to the game discuss what pictures on glyphs might be for.</p> <p>Exploring the spiritual significance of animals in cultures could lead to links with religious education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about sources of evidence relating to the Aztecs • what was documented • where are the documents now • the sort of questions that can be answered from studying the documents • to make inferences, explain, extrapolate from the glyphs 	<p>Looking at the sources available in the National Anthropological Museum of Mexico.</p> <p>Looking at the glyphs etc. in the codices reproduced on the worksheets. Interpreting the glyphs and extrapolating from them to explain about daily life in Aztec times.</p> <p>the archaeology of the great pyramid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ask and answer questions about the anthropological discoveries made about the Aztec • ask appropriate and relevant questions about the Aztec civilisation 	<p>The questions should be displayed and used later to link to the later activity 'What have we found out about the Aztec civilisation?'</p>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN	POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES CHILDREN	POINTS TO NOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to use pictures of artefacts to find out about particular aspects of life in Mexico to answer a historical question in an organised and structured way to consider how objects are presented in museums 	<p>What do historical sources tell us about life in Tenochtitlan.</p> <p>Children to use pictures, artefacts and documents to develop their understanding of Aztec homes, daily life, childhood and religion.</p> <p>Drawing artefacts. Ask the children to write a description that covers: its measurements, its decoration, why it might have been decorated, what it was used for, and questions they would like to ask about the artefact.</p> <p>Children to work in a group to investigate an area of Aztec life <i>eg fashion, food</i>, using reference books, pictures of artefacts. (Some groups to have questions to structure their enquiry, <i>eg Which artefacts can you use to find out about fashion? What does each of these artefacts tell you about fashion? What other questions would you like to ask?</i>)</p> <p>Writing in various forms.</p> <p>Simulation game about life of an ordinary Aztec farmer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make appropriate inferences, interpretations and extrapolations develop and explain hypotheses give an accurate and detailed description of one artefact select sources and infer information that is relevant to their topic use sources to describe an aspect of everyday life in Tenochtitlan create a booklet or poster to present information about an aspect of Aztec life researched. 	<p>Homes: design of ordinary Aztec's homes in the countryside and city; compare with Nobles' homes; building materials, furniture. Compare with own homes (c.f. "homes" in other historical periods). Hypothesise about development of house design in Aztec times.</p> <p>Farming: construction of chinampas, the need for land reclamation, crops grown, animals kept, farming methods; the market and trading with the barter system (and what passed for currency); religious ceremonies and daily practices; the practice of waging war to obtain tribute and sacrificial victims; Aztec number system (in relation to trading and collection of tribute). The Aztec language and number system. Methods of transport and navigation.</p> <p>Gods. The importance of the sun and Venus. The religious calendar and the 52 year cycle ending with the fire ceremonies, telling the time [using computer simulation to find out about Aztec calendar and Aztec names]. Astrologer priests. Aztec temples and some religious practices and ceremonies, sacrifices, burial practices, also "sport")</p> <p>Aztec warriors: their training and status; their weapons and armour; success in war as a means of achieving social status; hair-styles as a sign of status. All Aztec men as warriors.</p> <p>Farmers: techniques, tools, religious ceremonies to ensure a good crop</p> <p>Craftsmen: potters, methods of making pots; artists, rules of painting figures; mosaics and feather work</p> <p>The Emperor: Montezuma</p> <p>Nobles (priests, high ranking warriors, those with an important government job)</p> <p>Slaves</p> <p>Merchants: their roles; methods of transportation</p> <p>Aztec women and domestic life: food and cooking; diet, number of meals, ways of cooking; clothes and weaving: what they wore, designs, materials used, hair styles, hair styles and clothing as indicators of social status. Religious ceremonies of the home. The lives of rich compared with poor.</p> <p>Children's lives: naming of babies; fate of boys (to be warriors) and girls (domestic life); education of boys and girls; discipline in the home (c.f. Domestic life).</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that cities have some features in common • about how Tenochtitlan was organised 	<p>What does the map tell us about life in Tenochtitlan? Use a site plan of Tenochtitlan to help the children locate important buildings, <i>eg place of skulls, temples, causeway</i></p> <p>Use notes on layout of the centre of Tenochtitlan to label a map and label and orientate a picture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe how Tenochtitlan was organised and make comparisons with a town today • select information from sources • write about key features of Tenochtitlan 	<p>Tenochtitlan grew very quickly and was a very violent place. Cortes was 'shocked' at the scale of human sacrifice.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that there can be more than one interpretation of the past, <i>eg because of limitations of evidence ... or point of view</i> 	<p>What did the Aztecs think of the Spaniards? The Spanish Invasion and its intentions. Aztec understandings and interpretation of the strangers and their equipment.</p> <p>(a) Cortes' army and intentions. Aztec perceptions of the Europeans - the omens, rumours that reached Tenochtitlan and the association with the Quetzalcoatl legend. The meeting between Cortes and Montezuma II. Comparing the Spanish Army, its numbers, weapons and tactics with that of the Aztecs. The welcome, the assault, the battle, the death of Montezuma, the Spanish retreat, the siege, the fall of Tenochtitlan, the destruction of the city. (The role of other Central American peoples previously oppressed by the Aztecs.) The outcomes of the encounter.</p> <p>(b) The effects of the encounter between the Spanish and the Aztecs. Cultural exchange: the "things" (e.g. foods, knowledge, etc.) Europe introduced to America and the "things" taken from America back to Europe. Beneficial and detrimental effects. Ultimate consequences of the encounter.</p> <p>Where are the Aztecs now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suggest reasons why there are different interpretations 	

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES	POINTS TO NOTE
CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN		CHILDREN	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to summarise what they have found out about the Aztec civilisation that there are gaps in evidence from the past 	<p>What have we found out about life in Aztec civilisation?</p> <p>Brainstorm what the children have found out about the Aztec civilisation. <i>What are the most important things you found out about life in the Aztec civilisation? How did you find out? What do you still want to know?</i></p> <p>Remind the children of the list of questions they produced for the activity 'How was the Aztec civilisation investigated?' Ask the children to select and answer questions from the list.</p> <p>Children to write a codex/zig-zag book entitled, "Why I am glad that I wasn't born an Aztec!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> select questions and use relevant information to answer them suggest why they can answer some questions more fully than others 	<p>The class 'museum displays' can also be used as a source of information for this activity.</p>

A note on differentiation

Assessment of pupil's abilities in this history topic (and the elements of geography covered by the above Scheme of Work) will largely allow for differentiation by product. That is, tasks with the same historical content can be presented to pupils of a wide range of abilities and allow them to demonstrate achievement across several levels of attainment. This is possible because of the nature of the SoAs in History (being primarily skill-based) and the structure of the History Attainment Targets.

Across the bulk of the topic, however, some pupils will require support with the language demands (reading and writing) which are within the capability of the great majority of the class. These pupils will be assisted by the following methods:

- by teacher intervening to offer encouragement and/or support for individuals/groups during activities;
- by receiving help with reading (including, on occasions, having some of the material read to them if necessary);
- by being provided with parallel resources materials and task sheets employing simplified language;
- by a reduction the quantity of writing demanded;
- by being provided with assistance with writing activities: using of cloze/multiple choice/sentence completion/sequencing to reduce writing load;
- by being provided with a structure to guide them with their written work.

Tasks will be matched to the ability of the children by

- modifying task by extension or simplification;
- varying the level of detail expected; the level of explanation expected; the level of generalisation expected; the quantity of work expected;
- allowing longer time on main work for slower pupils;
- increasing or decreasing the number of factors that have to be taken into account to complete the task.

In all cases the intention will be to leave the key historical content the same. Furthermore, in writing tasks in which the quantity of writing is reduced, the type of writing required will not be changed.