



ANASAZI/MESOAMERICAN/ANDEAN: TIME AND CULTURAL PASSAGES

Level: middle school, 7th grade
Course: math, social studies, language arts, science (interdisciplinary)

Rationale

Often times, the human history of the Southwest commences with studying the Anasazi as an isolated civilization. This unit goes beyond this limited view and connects the Anasazi with the indigenous people of Latin America through trade and cultural exchange. Students will learn this link was crucial for the beginning and development of the Anasazi culture.

The Anasazi/Mesoamerica/Andean connection involves the study of the following ancient civilizations: Olmecs, Teotihuacan-Toltecs, Mayans, Incas, Aztecs and Anasazi. As students become involved with activities that familiarize them with the effects of land, climate, culture, religion and technology on these civilizations, they will appreciate the sophistication and interdependence of these ancient people. Students will be able to make connections from past civilizations to our present civilization.

Lesson Overview

To better relate to the ancient people, students will become a member of one of six civilization groups. Each group will be responsible for researching the development, advancement, and demise of its respective civilization. They will tell the story of their culture, religion and technology by using pictographs, movies, maps, books, models, role-playing, music, myths, calendars, etc.

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Each civilization will plot its own pictographic timeline against a Master timeline ranging from 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D. Students will compare/contrast aspects of their civilization to others. This will be accomplished through both written and oral means.

There will be two parts to this unit: Part One emphasizes group research and reporting on each of the six civilizations described above; Part Two emphasizes the analysis and synthesis of how these civilizations relate to one another.

Time Needed

10 - 20 days, depending on complexity of activities.

Materials

poster paper, construction paper, graph paper, markers/colored pencils, rulers/meter sticks, tape player/ Native American flute music (see bibliography), TV-VCR, VCR tapes on ancient indigenous cultures (see bibliography), overhead projector, building materials for pyramids and housing (sugar cubes, boxes, sticks, mud, etc.), maps of the Southwest and Latin America, blank overhead transparencies, transparency markers, computer with Internet connection, reference materials (see bibliography for ideas)

Procedures

Lesson 1: Introduction

Focus—to get students in the appropriate mindset

1. Have students sit on the floor in a semicircle. You (teacher) sit on a low stool.
2. Ask students to pretend they are living 2000 years ago in a tropical region, which is now referred to as Central America. They are Mayan children and are waiting to hear one of their elders tell them an important story about their culture.
3. Pretend you (the teacher) are the Mayan elder. Read aloud an ancient Mayan myth as a tape of wooden flute music plays in the background. Suggestion for Myth: Bierhorst, John. "The Hidden Corn." The Mythology of Mexico and Central America. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990. (Note: This book has many myths from which to choose.)

Lesson 2: Instruction

1. Post 6 separate pieces of butcher paper. Label each piece with a name of a civilization:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------|
| * Olmec | * Inca |
| * Teotihuacan-Toltec | * Maya |
| * Anasazi | * Aztec |

2. Stand in front of the Mayan butcher paper and tie the Focusing Activity to this one civilization. Indicate students will become knowledgeable about all six civilizations.
3. Give overview of the project. (See Rationale/Lesson Overview)
4. Ask for six students to be recorders, and give them each a marker to use on the butcher paper (Separate recorder for each piece of butcher paper.)
5. Conduct a large group brainstorm session. Have students answer the following questions for each civilization: (1) What do I know already? (2) How do I know what I already know? Recorders write answers to questions on butcher paper.
6. Separate students into the six civilization groups: Olmec, Teotihuacan-Toltec, Anasazi, Maya, Inca, Aztec
7. Give each group its respective piece of butcher paper.
8. Each group must research the development, advancement, and demise of its respective civilization. (See attached bibliography for some suggested resources.)
9. Information must include the following:
 - * Timeline of civilization's existence between 1500 B.C. and 1500 A.D.
 - * Location of civilization on a map
 - * Description of climate, terrain and natural resources
 - * Estimated size of population
 - * Description of changes in the following categories (specify dates):

Category	Time Period		
	(Early)	(Middle)	(Late)
Food			
Architecture			
Technology			
Religion			

- * Pictographs of the above four categories during each of the above time periods.
- * Describe the number and calendar systems.
- * Describe interactions with other groups.
- * List the strengths and weaknesses of the civilization.
- * List reasons for the civilization's downfall.
- * Brainstorm ways in which the downfall could have been prevented.
- * Each group will research, plan and construct a model of housing or other structure (e.g., pyramid) and/or infrastructure (roads, water systems, etc.)

Follow-up Activities

1. Class Presentation

Each group will give a presentation regarding the above-required information. Timelines will be placed under a “Master Timeline” and will include pictographs in the same order as the above chart. Presentations can include other information such as models, myths, music, movies, etc. All group members must participate.

2. Class Discussions

- * Compare/contrast features of the six civilizations, i.e., food, architecture, etc.
- * Discuss the interdependence of the groups.
- * Compare/contrast theories on the “collapse” of each civilization (drought, warfare, etc.)
- * Compare/contrast deforestation issue—then and now.

3. Role-playing

Set up a “United Civilizations” panel.

- * Have each civilization elect a leader or emperor to participate in a debate with the other leaders.
- * Each leader summarizes the accomplishments of her/his respective civilization.
- * Leaders brainstorm what they could have done to prevent each civilization’s collapse.
- * Introduce a Spanish explorer to the debate and see what happens.
- * What advice do these leaders have for our society today?

4. Response Papers

Students write a response paper which includes, but is not limited to the following:

- * Summary of their group’s research (see Lesson 2: Instruction, part 4 requirements) AND research process.
- * General items learned through large group discussions.
- * Favorite/least favorite part of project and reasons why.
- * Names of group members, and recommended grades, including student writing the paper.
- * Recommendation for next year: Should project be assigned to future students? List three reasons why.
- * Recommendations for any changes to the project — either for process or content.

5. Trunk Creations

Students of each civilization will create a “traveling trunk” filled with artifact replicas that are created by the students (codices, murals, weavings, etc.) Students could present “trunk” to class. Civilization groups could plan an evening program for parents or other group (senior citizens) and become docents for their trunks.

6. Maya/Aztec Math

Refer to MAYAQUEST/Classroom Study Guide/“It All Adds Up.” (See bibliography.) Students explore numbers and place value using the Maya base 20 system, then compare this to other bases.

7. Maya/Aztec Calendar

Refer to MAYAQUEST/Classroom Study Guide/“Keeping Track of Time.” (See bibliography) Students learn how to make a Mayan calendar and compare Mayan calendars to calendars of other cultures—both past and present. Students can create their own birthdate, as well as other dates, using these calendars.

8. Cooking Tlaxcalli (Aztec Corn Pancakes)

Students can experience preparing, cooking and eating an Aztec dietary staple. Nicholson, Robert and Claire Watts. "Make Your Own Tlaxcallis." The Aztecs. New York: Chelsea Juniors, 1994, page 17.

Tlaxcalli Ingredients

2 cups flour
1 1/2 Tbsp. margarine
1 tsp. baking powder
175 ml cold water
1 tsp. salt

Other Ingredients

Chili
avocado
cheese
chopped tomato and lettuce

1. Mix the dry ingredients together. Mix in the margarine until the mixture resembles bread crumbs.
2. Gradually add the water and stir in with a wooden spoon until the mixture forms a stiff dough.
3. Divide the dough into 12 balls. On a floured surface, roll the balls out into thin circles with a rolling pin.
4. Put a little vegetable oil in a frying pan and fry the tlaxcallis for 1 minute each side.

Serve your tlaxcallis warm. Fill them with chili, avocado, cheese, chopped tomato and lettuce and roll them up (burrito-style.)

Other Activities

1. Myth Writing (Language Arts Collaboration)

- * Students write a myth that reflects the beliefs of their civilization.
- * (Optional) Students can create a codex based on their myth.
- * Students do an oral presentation of their myth to the class.
- * Myth can be incorporated into the "traveling trunk" idea in #5 above.
- * Refer to MAYAQUEST/Classroom Guide/"Creation Myths and Other Tales." (See attached bibliography.) Students explore myths as a cultural insight into the beliefs of traditional peoples.

2. Science Collaboration

- * Discuss climate, terrain, natural resources, deforestation, archaeology, etc.
- * Refer to MAYAQUEST/Classroom Guide/"Environmental Perspectives: Try to See It My Way," "Dig It," "Jaguars, Quetzals, and Other Animals of the Rain Forest."

Bibliography

Cassette tapes

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URL: <http://kuhttp.cc.ukans.edu/~marc/geography/latinam/mexico/origins.html>

Describes the ancient indigenous people of Mexico and Central America.

URL: <http://www.rain.org/~pjenkin/textile.html>

Textiles-Inca: This gives the history of Andean textiles, including techniques of the pre-Inca and Inca cultures.

URL: <http://informns.k12.mn.us:701m/mn-k12/MAYAQUEST/studyguide>

This entire study guide, as well as the MAYAQUEST directory is an incredible multidisciplinary resource that pertains to the modern "rediscovery" of this ancient civilization. Many great thought-provoking discussions and "hands-on" activities.

Posters

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