

Name _____ GlobalStudies Hughes/Noble
Date _____ Period # _____

Person 1

Pre-Columbian Heritage-The Mayans

Three great civilizations existed in Latin America thousands of years before Christopher Columbus arrived in America (the pre-Columbian era): The Mayan(1500 BC-1200 AD), the Aztec(1400-1520) and the Inca (1000-1530). The Mayans were an native American people who developed a magnificent civilization in southern Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula.. The Mayan civilization reached its Golden Age, a period of greatest achievement, about 250 AD. and continued to flourish for 1000 years more. Mayans produced remarkable architecture, painting, pottery and sculpture. They were the first people in the New World to develop an advance form of writing. They made outstanding achievements in mathematics and developed an accurate yearly calendar. The Mayans were polytheistic, worshipping many gods. Mayans regarded their gods as helpful and harmful. To obtain the help of their gods the Mayans fasted, prayed and offered sacrifices. Deer, dogs and turkeys were sacrificed to feed the gods. The Mayans frequently offered their own blood which they spattered on pieces of bark paper. The Mayans also practiced some human sacrifice, such as throwing victims into deep wells or killing them at the funeral of great leaders. The Mayans built tall pyramids of limestone with stairways for the priest to climb to the top to perform ceremonies. The Mayans buried their dead under the floor of the houses where they had lived. Important people were buried with their finest garments, servants were killed and buried along with their masters, to serve them in the next live. Mayan civilization began to decline probably because of disease, crop failure and other groups moving into the area. .

1. Name the three great pre-Columbian native American civilizations.
2. Pre-Columbian means
3. The Mayan culture existed in
4. Define Golden Age
5. Give two examples that prove that the Mayans had an advanced civilization.
6. Give three reasons that caused the decline and end of the Mayan empire.

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Person 2

Pre-Columbian Heritage-The Incas

While the Mayans were advancing in Southern Mexico, another native American group was ruling one of the largest and richest empires in the Americas, the Incas. Their empire extended more than 2,500 miles along the western coast of South America and lasted from the year 1000-1532. The Incas were skilled engineers and built 1000's of miles of roads which linked the distant parts of their empire together. Incas created many fine articles from gold, silver and other materials. The Incas also wove fine cotton and woolen cloth. Incas communicated with an oral language only, they did not have a written language. Religion played an important role in the lives of the Incas. They believed that nature was created by the most important god, Viracocha. The Incas believed the gods oversaw daily life, whether to plant crops or start a war, the gods knew the correct answer. Sacrifices and offerings were the main part of the Inca religion. Crops and animals (mainly llamas) were sacrificed to keep the good will of the gods. Human sacrifices were made under special circumstances. Most people considered it an honor to be chosen for sacrifice. Incas believed that people lived in either heaven or hell after death. Important people were buried above ground in stone chambers. Others were buried in pits and caves. Inca builders became known for sturdy temples made of stone. The large blocks of stone were so finely cut they fit together exactly without cement.

The Inca empire was pretty much destroyed in 1532, when the Spanish conquistador, Francisco Pizarro, invaded this area. With only 167 men and many guns the Spanish captured the Inca emperor, Atahualpa, and held him for ransom. The emperor ordered the ransom of one room full of gold and two rooms full of silver to be paid. The Spanish took the gold, but executed Atahualpa. The Incas now had no recognized leader. The Spanish easily took over the empire and destroyed whatever they could of the Inca civilization.

1. Tell where the Inca empire existed.
2. Give two examples that show that the Incas had an advanced civilization.
3. Identify Francisco Pizarro
4. Summarize in 3-5 sentences how the Spanish ended the Inca civilization.

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Person 3

Pre-Columbian Heritage-The Aztecs

The Aztecs were the last native American group to organize a civilization in Latin America. Their civilizations began in the 1400's, but was wiped out by the Spanish conquistadors while it was less than 120 years old. The Aztecs were a great people. They built great pyramids which still stand in Mexico City. They built cities as large as any in Europe at that time. The Aztec began their culture in the city of Tenochtitlan which stood on the site of the present-day Mexico City. The Aztecs developed a written language called pictographic writing, which consisted of small pictures representing ideas and sounds. Religion was extremely important in Aztec life. The people devoted much of their time to religious practices and even waged war largely to obtain prisoners for sacrifice to their gods. The Aztecs were greatly feared because they made human sacrifices to the sun god they worshipped. They worshipped many gods: the god of war, the sun god, the god of fire and the corn god. Human sacrifice played an important role in religious ceremonies. Priests slashed open the chest of a living victim and tore out the heart. The Aztecs believed the gods needed human hearts and blood to remain strong. Worshipers sometimes ate portions of the victim's body. They may have thought the dead person's strength and bravery would be passed on to those who ate the flesh. Most victims were prisoners of war or slaves.

In 1519, the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortes marched into the capital city to overtake it and captured Montezuma, the Aztec leader. The Aztecs offered little resistance since they thought Cortes was the Quetzalcoatl, an Aztec god who had sailed away and promised to return some day. In 1520, the Aztecs rebelled against the Spanish, Montezuma was killed in the fighting. In May, 1521, the Spanish reorganized and attacked again. Montezuma's successor surrendered to the Spanish. The Spanish considered it their duty as Christians to wipe out the temples and all other traces of the pagan Aztec religion. They destroyed Tenochtitlan and built Mexico City over the ruins.

1. Tell where the Inca empire existed.
2. Give two examples that show that the Incas had an advanced civilization.
3. Identify Francisco Pizarro
4. Summarize in 3-5 sentences how the Spanish ended the Inca civilization.