



Exploring the Inca Empire and Culture

9-12 Grades

This activity is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

45-60 minutes

Students work in small groups of 3-4 examining one of two sets of primary and secondary sources related to Inca government and culture. What can we infer from each source? What additional questions do we have to investigate further? Half of the students in the class lead the others through each document set.

Activity Goals

Focus Question: What can we learn about this ancient culture through primary and secondary sources? What details corroborate what we know already? Do any conflict with what we have learned? What details lead us to further questions?

Context: This lesson should follow basic instruction on the Inca culture, society, and government. Students will need background knowledge to be successful.

Objectives:

Students will gain a deeper understanding of Inca culture and government. They will evaluate European accounts of contact and conquest interpretations for accuracy and develop an argument to explain this perspective. Historical thinking skills addressed are sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and evaluate the historical narrative.

Virginia SOLS

WHI.11 The student will demonstrate knowledge of major civilizations of the Western Hemisphere, including the Mayan, Aztec, and Incan, by

- a) describing geographic relationships, with emphasis on patterns of development in terms of climate and physical features;
- b) describing cultural patterns and political and economic structures.

WHI.1 The student will improve skills in historical research and geographical analysis by

- a) identifying, analyzing, and interpreting primary and secondary sources to make generalizations about events and life in world history to 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
- b) using maps, globes, artifacts, and pictures to analyze the physical and cultural landscapes of the world and interpret the past to 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
- c) identifying major geographic features important to the study of world history to 1500 A.D. (C.E.);



- d) identifying and comparing political boundaries with the locations of civilizations, empires, and kingdoms from 4000 B.C. (B.C.E.) to 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
- e) analyzing trends in human migration and cultural interaction from prehistory to 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
- f) analyzing the impact of economic forces, including taxation, government spending, trade, resources, and monetary systems, on events to 1500 A.D. (C.E.).

Common Core Standards

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3](#)

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6](#)

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Assessment: Student mastery will be assessed through class discussion and performance on the following tasks.

Task 1: Students will write analysis of two of the sources - What insight do they give us about Inca culture?

Task 2: Students will complete a short write-up explaining how the European portrayal of the conquest was inaccurate and possible reasons for that portrayal.

Activity Details

- A. Primary Sources: see below
- B. Procedure: Group students (if possible in an even number of groups of 3 or 4). Practice the routine together on the starter document. After that, each group should work together to analyze each document, recording their thoughts on post-it notes. How can each document help us better understand the Aztec culture and government? Use the steps of the Think-Observe-Wonder analysis.



Note that the starter document is a secondary source in regard to the capture of Atahualpa by the Spaniards. What can we learn from the depiction of these events by Spanish artists?

- C. What you will need before implementing: You will need color copies of every document and description information on the back.

Starter document



“The seizure of Atahualpa at Cajamarca”

Jean Michel Moreau artist, Pierre Duflos engraver

1760-1810

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98519205/>

What details do you notice? Who created this portrayal? How do you know? What messages does it convey about the native people? What messages does it convey about the Spaniards?

When was this created? Is it a primary or secondary source? Why? What does that mean about the usefulness of the image itself?



Document Group 1



Doc. 1, A.

Fortress of Sacsahuamán, Cuzco, Peru

photographic print 1940-1947

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008677111/>



Doc. 1, B.

Ruins at Machu Picchu, Peru

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/1492/america.html>



Doc. 1, C.

Chimú Vessel Flute

South American Indian avian whistle vessel @1400, Dayton C. Miller Flute

Collection, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/exploring-the-early-americas/pizarro-and-the-incas.html#obj0>

Document Group 2



Doc. 2, A.

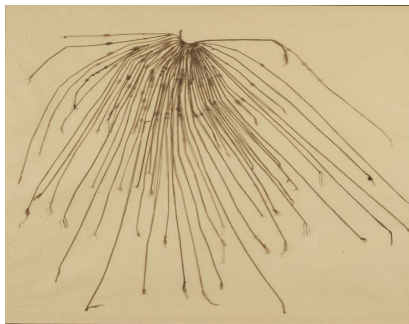
Mummy, @1500, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/sacrificial-ceremony.html>



Doc. 2, B.

Terraces at Machu Picchu

<http://0-www.pbs.org.librus.hccs.edu/wgbh/nova/ancient/wright-inca-engineering.html>



Doc. 2, C.

Quipu, before 1600, Princeton Mesoamerican Manuscripts, no. 5,

<http://libweb5.princeton.edu/mssimages/meso-princeton2.html>



Doc. 2, D.

Human figurine, photo by WGBH Educational Foundation,
<http://0-www.pbs.org.librus.hccs.edu/wgbh/nova/ancient/sacrificial-ceremony.html>