

# The Maya, Aztecs, and Incas

**Grade Level:** First Grade Art

**Presented by:** Dr. Charles R. Waller, Bramlett Elementary School, Oxford, Mississippi

**Length of Unit:** Four Lessons

## I. ABSTRACT

This unit of study integrates art and world civilization skills. The art skills will include: mass and line in sculpture, architecture, points and lines in paintings, mosaics, patterning, and importance of light. The world civilization skills will include aspects of the Maya, Aztec, and Inca civilizations including their art and architecture, history, culture, and religion. The end product of this unit will be a walk through museum representing an ancient temple.

## II. OVERVIEW

A. Concept objectives: The student: will be exposed to examples of the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca cultures; will explore the art of these three cultures (paintings, hieroglyphics, and architecture); will be exposed to the work of the archeologist; and the effects their religion had on the day to day life of these early peoples.

B. Specific content from Core Knowledge Sequence: mass and line in sculpture, architecture, points and lines in paintings, importance of light, and history, religion, and culture from the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca civilizations.

C. Skills to be taught: ancient history, paper mache, hieroglyphic/glyphic writing, drawing, and painting.

## III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

A. For teachers: Mayan, Aztec, and Inca arts and crafts, history, Architecture and culture.

B. For students: world geography, drawing, painting, sculpture, and paper mache.

## IV. RESOURCES

The New True Book series by Childrens Press, includes Books on the Maya, and Aztecs. The internet also provides a great deal of information on each of the three cultures in forms from historical to travel. These sites can provide many pictures that can be used in multimedia presentations. Encyclopedias on CD ROM will also provide images to use to make multimedia presentations.

## V. LESSONS

Lesson One: Telling Stories with Glyphic pictures

A. Objectives: Students will be exposed to examples of Mayan, Aztec, and Inca culture with the use of pictures, books, examples of various arts and crafts, and the use of the internet to provide supporting information. The students will be exposed to the work of the archeologist and look at artifacts found by archeologists that came from Central and South America. The students will explore the effects that the religion had on the Mayan, Aztec, and Incas. The students will design and draw a picture story using glyphic drawing as show in the examples.

B. Materials: white construction paper, colored markers, artifacts from Central and South America, and examples of glyphic writings.

D. Key Vocabulary: archeologist, artifacts, glyphic, sculpture, architecture, temples, and pyramids.

E. Procedures:

1. The teacher will introduce the lesson by discussing various works of art and architecture that illustrate Mayan, Aztec, and Inca designs.

2. The teacher will give the class an overview of the work of an archeologist..

3. The teacher will discuss the effects that the religion of the Mayan, Aztec, and Incas had on their art, architecture, and culture.

4. The teacher will show the class different examples of Mayan, Aztec, and Inca designs with the use of examples and pictures.

5. The students will design their own glyphic picture using paper, markers, and the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca symbols and figures shown to the class.

6. Students will be allowed to share their works with the class and explain the design that they used, time permitting.

7. Student work will be saved to display in the mock temple to be assembled at the end of the unit.

F. Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on teacher observation during discussion times, and individual student participation in large group discussions. Further evaluation will be based on the students' ability to follow directions and complete the task of making a glyphic drawing.

Lesson Two: Architecture

A. Objectives: Students will be exposed to examples of Mayan, Aztec, and Inca temples, tombs, pyramids, and palaces through the use of pictures, books, slides, and multimedia presentations. Examples of various arts found in the ancient building will also be shown. Students will learn about the various gods that were worshipped in the religions of the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca. Students will then try to construct an ancient gateway using materials provided.

B. Materials: visual examples of Mayan, Aztec, and Inca architecture, and LOTS of various sized cardboard boxes.

D. Key Vocabulary: archeologist, artifacts, pyramids, glyphics, monolithic statues, mosaic, and stele.

E. Procedures:

1. The teacher will introduce the lesson by showing different examples of Mayan, Aztec, and Inca painting and design, temples, tombs, pyramids, and palaces.

- Specific examples of glyphics, monoliths, mosaics, and stele will also be shown within the architecture.

2. Students will be divided into two groups. Their objective is to each build a wall using cardboard boxes of varying sizes. The wall will also have to include a doorway or gateway.

3. Students will have to figure out how to make a doorway that is sturdy using only the boxes provided. There should be several different solutions to the problem based on the different shapes and sizes of boxes provided, and examples shown.

4. Students will discuss the different methods that worked and didn't work and why.

F. Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on teacher observation during discussion times, individual student participation in large group activities, group completion of the wall using the boxes.

### Lesson Three: Sculpture

A. Objectives: Students will be exposed to more examples of Mayan, Aztec, and Inca antiquity through the use of multimedia presentation, and examples of various arts. Students will learn to model using paper mache. Suggested artifacts to be made: Toltec figure holding bowl, reliefs of Mayan and Aztec calendars, stele, toltec warriors, Mixtec masks, monolithic head, double headed serpent, jaguar and feathered serpent sculptures, and Mayan, Aztec, and Inca gods.

B. Materials: Paper mache glue, cardboard, Styrofoam, colored paper, paint, newspaper, sand, and other objects to decorate the tomb with (beads, candles, pottery, etc.)

C. Key Vocabulary: paper mache, archeologist, artifacts, stele, monolith, jaguar, serpent, sculpture, and relief carving.

E. Procedures:

1. The teacher will introduce the lesson by showing more examples of Mayan, Aztec, and Inca artifacts and designs.
2. The teacher will demonstrate the proper way to use the paper mache and carving into the styrofoam.
3. The students will paste the paper dipped in glue to the cardboard forms, and prepare them for any painted design needed.
4. The paper mache objects will be allowed to dry.
5. Styrofoam sheets can be carved into by the students using dull instruments like spoons to create relief sculptures.
6. The students will decorate the paper mache and Styrofoam objects by using paint, beads, plastic jewels, etc. Sand can be mixed with the paints to give it a stone texture.
7. The artifacts will be allowed to completely dry.

F. Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on the students' participation in the project, and the elements learned from each lesson represented in the students' finished products.

### Lesson Four: Temple Construction

A. Objectives: The student will learn about ancient building construction and decorating by applying their skills in preparing a Mayan, Aztec, or Inca temple. Artifacts will be placed in the temple that were created during this unit of study.

B. Materials: quality tape, cardboard, paint, newspaper, sheets of Styrofoam, paper mache, dead plants, student made artifacts, and glyphics.

D. Key Vocabulary: paper mache, archeologist, artifacts, glyphics, architecture, and sculpture.

E. Procedures:

1. The students will assist the teacher in constructing the temple entrance using cardboard in a room or hallway of the school that will be used to make the display.
2. The students will paint the tomb entrance and other sections to resemble an ancient stone temple entrance.
3. Glyphic and other drawings will be placed on the walls for decoration.
4. Paper mache artifacts will be placed around the temple.
5. If possible, lighting should be very dim to resemble torch light that might have been used during that time period.

F. Evaluation: The success of this project will be based on the interaction of students and their family in this unique learning experience of bringing a museum to school. Students should be able to explain each of the items in the temple that they helped work on.

## VI. CULMINATION ACTIVITY

To complete the unit of study, a parent's open house time should be provided to give students the opportunity to escort their families through the mock temple and explain each of the artifacts, the building construction, and the temple paintings on the walls. The time for parents and family to visit could be in conjunction with a PTA/PTO meeting or other school function at night. This will thus allow the students to explain their work, its content, and how they constructed it to their friends and family.

## VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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