

Travel to Mesoamerica

Grade Level: First grade

Presented by: Margaret Davenport, Pam Lee, Hawthorne Elementary; EttaKay Nickel, Green Elementary, San Antonio, Texas

Length of Unit: Six Lessons

I. ABSTRACT

Travel back in time to ancient America. Climb the Andes and discover the lost city of Machu Picchu. Journey through the fertile lands of Central America. The final destination is Tenochtitlan where students construct an ancient city and enjoy the beverage of the gods, chocolate.

II. OVERVIEW

A. Concept Objectives

1. Develop a sense of historical empathy. See through the eyes of people who were there.
2. Recognize that literature and art reflect the inner life of a people.
3. The student understands the relative location of a place. (Geo. Teks1.4)

B. Content from the *Core Knowledge*

1. Understand that maps have keys or legends with symbols and their uses. (page 27)
2. Find directions on a map: east, west, north, south. (page 27)
3. Identify the major oceans: Pacific, Atlantic. (page 27)
4. Review the seven continents: Asia, Europe, Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Australia. (page 27)
5. Locate: United States, Mexico, Central America. (page 27)
6. Locate: the Equator, Northern Hemisphere, Southern Hemisphere. (page 27)
7. Use geographical terms: peninsula, island. (page 27)
8. Maya in Mexico and Central America (page 29)
9. Aztecs in Mexico: Moctezuma, Tenochtitlan (page 29)
10. Inca in South America: Cities in the Andes, Machu Picchu (page 29)

C. Skill Objectives

1. The student can identify specific places on maps and globes. (Geo. TEKS 1.4)
2. The student identifies the characteristics of the various types of texts. (L.A. TEKS 1.14)
3. The student listens and speaks to gain knowledge of his/her culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures. (L.A TEKS 1.16)
4. The student uses symbols, finds locations, and determines directions on maps and globes.
5. The student identifies major landforms and bodies of water, including continents and oceans on maps and globes.
6. The student draws maps to show places and routes.

III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

A. For Teachers

1. *What Your First Grader Needs to Know*_by E.D. Hirsch
2. *The Earliest Americans*_by Helen Roney Sattler
3. *Maps* by Teacher's Friend Publications

B. For Students

1. Maps and globes; what they represent, how we use them

2. Rivers, lakes, and mountains: what they are and how they are represented on maps and globes
3. Locate the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean
4. Locate the North and South Poles
5. Identify and locate the seven continents on a map and globe

IV. RESOURCES

- A. *Machu Picchu* by Elizabeth Mann
- B. *What Your First Grader Needs to Know* by E.D. Hirsch
- C. *Maya Moon* by Marianne Mitchell
- D. *The Moon Seems to Change* by Franklyn M. Branley
- E. *The Aztecs* by Penny Bateman
- F. *Pyramid of the Sun Pyramid of the Moon* by Leonard Everett Fisher
- G. *The Incas* by Chloe Sayer

V. LESSONS

Lesson One: Globe

- A. *Daily Objectives*
 1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand the significance of the relative location of a place.
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Identify the major oceans: Pacific and Atlantic.
 - b. Review the seven continents.
 - c. Locate the Equator, Northern Hemisphere, Southern Hemisphere.
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. The students will identify and label specific areas of the globe
 - b. The student uses symbols, finds locations, and determines directions on maps and globes.
 - c. The student identifies major landforms and bodies of water, including continents and oceans on maps and globes.
- B. *Materials*
 1. Large blue balloons, one per student
 2. Glue
 3. Yarn
 4. Paper for labels
 5. Copies of North America and South America sized to fit on the balloon the way that continents fit on a globe
 6. Globes
 7. Scissors
 8. Pencils
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
 1. Hemisphere- one half of the planet Earth
 2. Equator- the imaginary line that circles the middle of the earth between the two poles
 3. North and South poles
 4. Pacific Ocean
 5. Atlantic Ocean
 6. Globe
- D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Ask the children to tell you what they know about a globe in order to ascertain what they remember from Kindergarten. Remind them that a globe is a model of the earth if necessary.
 2. Review the names of the continents with the children. You can use the following piggyback song to review. The melody is “ Are You Sleeping?”
 North America, South America, Europe, too
 Good for you.
 Asia and Africa
 Australia and Antarctica
 Now you’re through.
 3. Distribute the globes and have the children locate the continents, the North Pole, South Pole, Pacific, and Atlantic Oceans.
 4. Have the students identify the equator and explain that the equator is the imaginary line that circles the middle of the earth between the two poles and divides the world into halves. Explain that the half on the northern side of the globe is the Northern Hemisphere and the south side is called the Southern Hemisphere.
 5. Have the students focus on North and South America. Inform them that they are going to construct a model that shows the western part of the earth.
 6. Give each student a copy of North and South America. They need to cut out the copies and label these continents. Next have them make labels for the Northern and Southern Hemispheres on the remaining paper. You can provide the students with labels if this is too difficult.
 7. Explain that the students will blow up their balloons (if you can enlist volunteers to do this beforehand you might consider it) then glue the continents in the correct positions on the globe.
 8. Tell the students that they are going to use yarn to symbolize the equator. They need to position the yarn correctly and label each hemisphere.
 9. Use the rubric to assess the student performance.
- E. *Evaluation/Assessment*
 Rubric:
- | | |
|---|---|
| 3 | Neatly and correctly labeled. Continents and equator in the correct position. |
| 2 | Correctly labeled. One mistake in positioning. |
| 1 | Attempted to complete globe |

Lesson Two: Map Lesson

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. The student understands the relative location of a place. (Geo. TEKS 1.4)
2. Lesson Content
 - a. Understand that maps have keys or legends with symbols.
 - b. Find directions on a map: east, west, north, south
 - c. Locate: North America, South America, and Central America
 - d. Identify the major oceans: Pacific, Atlantic
3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. The student can identify specific places on a map. (Geo. TEKS 1.4)

B. *Materials*

1. Black-line map of the world for each student
2. Overhead transparency of the black-line map

3. Overhead projector
 4. *Me on the Map* by Joan Sweeny
 5. Crayons or map pencils
 6. Pencils
 7. Overhead markers
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Map key-a list explaining the symbols on a map, sometimes called a legend
 2. Compass- Rose compass points on a map
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Review the learning from lesson one reminding the children that a globe is a model of the earth.
 2. Ask them to recall what they know about maps.
 3. Read the book, *Me on the Map*, and discuss the content. Make sure that they understand that a map is a simplified picture of an area.
 4. Tell them that they are now going to identify areas of the earth and place themselves on the map.
 5. Distribute the maps and put the transparency on the overhead.
 6. First demonstrate how to draw a simple compass rose and reinforce its function. Then have them draw a compass rose on their maps.
 7. Next, demonstrate how to make a map key.
 - a. Draw a blue rectangle to represent oceans.
 - b. Draw a green rectangle to represent land.
 - c. Draw a stick figure to represent the student. Have the students label this symbol with their own names.
 8. Next, demonstrate how to label their maps and let them work as you demonstrate. Label the seven continents, Central America, the Pacific, and Atlantic Oceans, and place the symbol of themselves in the correct location. Emphasize North, South, and Central America in this process.
 9. Then the students need to color the oceans and the land very lightly using the colors indicated in the key.
- E. *Evaluation/Assessment*
1. Evaluate this activity by grading the paper in a traditional manner and giving a numerical score.

Lesson Three: Incas

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. The student understands the relative location of a place. (Geo. TEKS 1.4)
 - b. The student understands various physical and human characteristics of the environment. (Geo. TEKS 1.6)
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Inca in South America: Cities in the Andes, Machu Picchu
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. The student uses symbols, finds locations, and determines directions on maps and globes.
 - b. The student identifies major landforms and bodies of water, including continents and oceans on maps and globes.
- B. *Materials*
1. Map of South America
 2. Transparency of the above map

3. Map pencils or crayons
4. Resource books about the Incas
5. Large map of the world
6. *Machu Picchu* by Elizabeth Mann
7. Overhead projector
8. Overhead markers

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. Incas- group of people who ruled an empire in western South America and built cities high in the Andes. Incas did not have a written language.
2. Andes- a mountain range along the western coast of South America, on the Pacific Ocean
3. Cuzco-ancient capital of Peru
4. Machu Picchu-lost Mayan city high in the Andes

D. *Procedures/Activities*

Day One

1. Tell the children that they are going to begin a unit of study on the ancient civilizations that lived in the Americas. They will be learning about the Inca, Mayas and Aztecs. Today they will start their study with the Inca.
2. Introduce the location of the Incan Empire using a large map of the world. Explain that the empire stretched along the Pacific coast of South America. Point to all of the countries included in the empire, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and parts of Chile. Explain that the Inca built great cities high in the Andes Mountains and farmed in the valleys between the mountains and Pacific coast. The capital city was called Cuzco. Point out Cuzco.

3. Tell the legend of how the Inca begin. This is a paraphrased version condensed from various sources:

When the earth was new all the people lived in little holes inside the earth. These holes were called paqarinas. The Inca paqarina was located in southern Peru and had three caves. One day Manco Capac walked out of the middle cave. Manco Capac's

Father was the Sun and his mother was the Moon. Three of Manco Capac's brothers and four of his sisters followed him out of the cave. Soon ten groups of people came out of the other two caves.

All of these people were looking for some fertile land to farm.

The Sun gave Manco Capac a golden rod and said, "Throw this golden rod to the ground and when the Earth swallows the rod then you will know that you have found the place to build your city."

The rod disappeared into the ground in Cuzco, and Manco Capac founded the Incan capital of Cuzco. Later in the very place where the Earth had swallowed up the golden rod a beautiful temple was built to honor the Sun.

4. Tell the children that they are going to locate the Incan Empire on a map of South America. Distribute the maps and put the transparency on the overhead. Using the transparency demonstrate how to complete today's assignment.
 - a. Make a compass rose.
 - b. Make a map key with symbols for mountains, a star for the capital city, and a red colored rectangle to show the Incan Empire.
 - c. Label the Andes Mountains, Cuzco, and draw the boundaries of the Incan Empire.
 - d. Have the children lightly color the area within the empire's boundaries red.
 - e. Label the Pacific Ocean if it appears on your map.

Day Two

1. Read and discuss selected parts of the book, *Machu Picchu*, to give the children a taste of what life was like during Incan times. This book has excellent illustrations, but if you cannot find it, use any reference that covers the content.
 2. Distribute the maps used yesterday and label the lost city of Machu Picchu.
 3. Use the following rubric to assess student learning.
- E. *Evaluation/Assessment*
- Rubric
4. Neatly and correctly labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. No mistakes
 3. Neatly labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. One mistake.
 2. Labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. Two mistakes.
 1. Attempted to complete map

Lesson Four: Mayan

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Recognize that literature and art reflect the inner life of a people.
 - b. The student understands the relative location of a place using a map or a globe. (Geo. TEKS 1.4)
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Locate: United States, Mexico, Central America
 - b. Locate: the Equator, Northern Hemisphere, Southern Hemisphere.
 - c. Use geographical terms: peninsula, Yucatan Peninsula
 - d. Maya in Mexico and Central America
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. The student can identify specific places on a map or globe. (Geo. TEKS 1.4)
 - b. The student listens and speaks to gain knowledge of his/her culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures (L.A. TEKS 1.16)
- B. *Materials*
1. Black-line map of North America, South America and Central America
 2. Transparency of the same map
 3. Crayons or map pencils
 4. *People of the Corn* by Mary-Joan Gerson
 5. Overhead projector
 6. Overhead markers
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Peninsula-a large piece of land that juts out into water and is nearly surrounded by water
 2. Maya-one of the greatest civilizations of the ancient world. It consisted of two hundred cities in southern Mexico, Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, and El Salvador. The Maya wrote using glyphs.
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
- Day One*
1. Introduce the Maya by reading the book *People of the Corn* to the children. (You can use any Mayan folktale if you cannot locate a copy of this book.) Discuss the content of the story and the illustrations and assess the students' awareness of the Mayan culture.

2. Put the transparency of the map on the overhead and have the children review the locations of North, South, and Central America.
 3. Distribute maps to the children.
 - a. Make a compass rose.
 - b. Make a map key with an orange colored rectangle to show the Mayan Empire.
 - c. Label North America, South America, Central America, and draw the boundaries of the Mayan Empire.
 - d. Have the children lightly color the area within the empire's boundaries orange.
 - e. Label the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean.
 - f. Define the word peninsula and point out the Yucatan Peninsula to the children.
 - g. Draw an arrow on the transparency that points to the Yucatan Peninsula and label the peninsula.
 - h. Use the rubric to assess the map.
- E. *Evaluation/Assessment*
 Rubric:
- 4 Neatly and correctly labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. No mistakes
 - 3 Neatly labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. One mistake.
 - 2 Labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. Two mistakes.
 - 1 Attempted to complete map

Lesson Five: The Magic of Myths

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Recognize that literature and art reflect the inner life of a people.
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Maya in Mexico and Central America
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. The student identifies the characteristics of the various types of texts. (L.A.TEKS1.14)
- B. *Materials*
1. *Maya Moon* by Marianne Mitchell
 2. *The Moon Seems to Change* by Franklyn M. Branley
 3. Chart tablet
 4. Venn diagram drawn on a large sheet of chart paper or butcher paper
 5. Drawing paper
 6. Crayons or markers
 7. *A Quetzalcoatl Tale of Chocolate* by Marilynn Parke or any Mesoamerican myth or legend
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Myth-a story that tells about a belief of a group of people; myths reveal what the people who told them think about how the world works.
 2. Legend-a story passed down through the ages
 3. Venn diagram-two overlapping circles that provide three writing spaces; it is used to contrast likenesses and differences
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
 Day One

1. Introduce the word myth to the children and explain what a myth is. Sometimes with children literature the words “myth” and “legend” are used interchangeably, so the definition for legend is included.
2. Read the book *Maya Moon* to the children. Discuss what happens in the story and the natural phenomena this story is trying to explain.
3. Write the word myth on a piece of chart paper. Ask the children if they think this story is a myth and have them cite examples from the text. Record the children’s responses on a chart and keep the chart posted. It will be needed for tomorrow’s lesson. .

Day Two

1. Review the characteristics of an informational, non-fiction text to the student.
2. Ask the children to retell the story of *Maya Moon* and analyze if it is an informational, non-fiction book.
3. Read the book *The Moon Seems to Change* and discuss the information presented. Have them decide what type of text this book is.
4. Review the function of a Venn diagram with the children.
5. Draw a large Venn diagram on chart paper.
6. Have the children compare and contrast *Maya Moon* and *The Moon Seems to Change*. Record their responses on the diagram.

Day Three

1. Review the characteristics of myths and non-fiction.
2. Tell the children that you want them to analyze what type of text you are going to share with them. They will need to decide if the book is a myth or non-fiction. Read the book *A Quetzalcoatl Tale of Chocolate* or any myth available to you.
3. Pass out drawing paper.
4. Tell the children to draw a picture and write a sentence that illustrates if the book *A Quetzalcoatl Tale of Chocolate* is a myth or non-fiction.

E. *Evaluation/Assessment*

1. Evaluate the drawings to determine if children have a beginning understanding of what a myth is.

Lesson Six: Aztecs

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Develop a sense of historical empathy. See through the eyes of people who were there.
 - b. The student listens and speaks to gain knowledge of his/her culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures. (L.A TEKS 1.16)
 - c. The student understands the relative location of a place. (Geo. TEKS 1.4)
2. Lesson Content
 - a. Understand that maps have keys or legends with symbols and their uses.
 - b. Find directions on a map: east, west, north, south.
 - c. Identify the major oceans: Pacific, Atlantic.
 - d. Locate: United States, Mexico, Central America.
 - e. Use geographical terms: peninsula, island.
 - f. Aztecs in Mexico: Moctezuma, Tenochtitlan (page 29)
3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. The student can identify specific places on a map or globe. (Geo. TEKS 1.4)

- b. The student listens and speaks to gain knowledge of his/her culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures. (L.A TEKS 1.16)
- c. The student draws maps to show places and routes.
- d. The student uses symbols, finds locations, and determines directions on maps and globes.
- e. The student identifies major landforms and bodies of water, including continents and oceans on maps and globes.

B. *Materials*

- 1. Black-line map of North America
- 2. Transparency of the black-line map
- 3. Transparency markers
- 4. Boxes of various sizes
- 5. Small plastic swimming pool
- 6. Assorted tempera paints
- 7. Paint brushes
- 8. Overhead projector
- 9. *The Aztecs* by Penny Bateman
- 10. *Pyramid of the Sun Pyramid of the Moon* By Leonard Everett Fisher
- 11. Toilet paper and paper towel rolls
- 12. Compass
- 13. Crayons or map pencils

C. *Key Vocabulary*

- 1. Moctezuma-was the ruler of the Aztec when it was conquered by the Spanish
- 2. Tenochtitlan-great city that was located on an island where Mexico City is today
- 3. Island-a piece of land smaller than a continent that is completely surrounded by water.
- 4. Aztecs-people who once ruled a great empire in Mexico
- 5. Causeway-raised roads across water

D. *Procedures/Activities*

Day One

- 1. Introduce the Aztec Empire by reading selected pages from a book about Aztecs. Discuss the food, clothing and shelter of the region as well the Aztec calendar and pictographic writing.
- 2. Put the transparency of the map on the overhead and have the children review the locations of North and Central America. Point out the United States, Mexico, and Canada
- 3. Distribute maps to the children.
 - a. Make a compass rose.
 - b. Make a map key with a purple colored rectangle to show the Aztec Empire, and a star to represent Tenochtitlan.
 - c. Label the Mexico, United States, Central America, and draw the boundaries of the Aztec Empire.
 - d. Have the children lightly color the area within the empire's boundaries purple.
 - e. Label the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean.
 - f. Draw a star in the location of Tenochtitlan
 - g. Use the rubric to assess the map.

5. *Evaluation/Assessment*

Rubric:

- 4 Neatly and correctly labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. No mistakes
- 3 Neatly labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. One mistake.
- 2 Labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. Two mistakes.
- 1 Attempted to complete map

Days Two, Three, And Four

1. Read books with graphic illustrations like *Pyramid of the Sun Pyramid of the Moon* so the children can learn about the city Tenochtitlan. Explain that the city was located on a high plateau in the mountains. A lake was located on the plateau. Tenochtitlan was built on an island in the middle of a lake. There were three main causeways that connected the island to the shore.
2. Define the words causeway and island for the children.
3. Explain that the students are going to construct a model of Tenochtitlan.
4. Divide the students into groups and have each group sign up for a specific project. They can sign up for Pyramids, market, palace, temple or any other project you would like to assign.
5. Let the children work in groups to complete their structures. The structures need to be painted when they are finished.
6. As a class set up the city in a child-size swimming pool. Use the bottom or side of a large box for the island.
7. Position the island in the center of the pool.
8. Place the structures on the island. Have the children make roads in the city and causeways that connect to the sides of the pool.
9. Then use the compass to determine where North is. Make a small compass rose out of paper and place it in the city.

Day Five

1. Distribute paper to the children so they can make a map of the model of Tenochtitlan.
 - a. Draw the city facing north.
 - b. Make a compass rose.
 - c. Make a map key with symbols for pyramids, roads, causeways, and the market. Label the symbols. You can supply the symbols or the students can provide their own.
 - d. Title the map.
 - e. Color the map using crayons or map pencils.
2. Evaluate using the following rubric.

E. *Evaluation/Assessment*

Rubric:

- 4 Neatly drawn and correctly labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. No mistakes
- 3 Neatly draw and labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. One mistake.
- 2 Labeled. Compass Rose and Map Key complete. Two mistakes.
- 1 Attempted to complete map

VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY (Optional)

A. *Materials*

1. Chocolate milk
2. Vanilla, Mexican vanilla if you can locate it
3. Cinnamon

4. Hot plate
 5. Pan
 6. Wooden spoon
 7. Cups
 8. Appendix A
- B. *Procedure*
1. Invite a class of fifth graders to your classroom (Fifth grade Core Knowledge covers this topic).
 2. Prepare the hot chocolate
 3. Serve them the beverage of the gods, chocolate.
 4. Display the model and have the children share their learning with each other.

VII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

- A. Appendix A – Easy Mexican Hot Chocolate

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX A

Easy Mexican Hot Chocolate

1. Put a half -gallon of chocolate milk in a large pan.
2. Place the pan on a hot plate, heat milk until hot, stirring constantly.
3. Remove from heat.
4. Add vanilla and cinnamon to taste.
5. Stir well.
6. Serve in cups