

Art Of Mexico & Central & South America

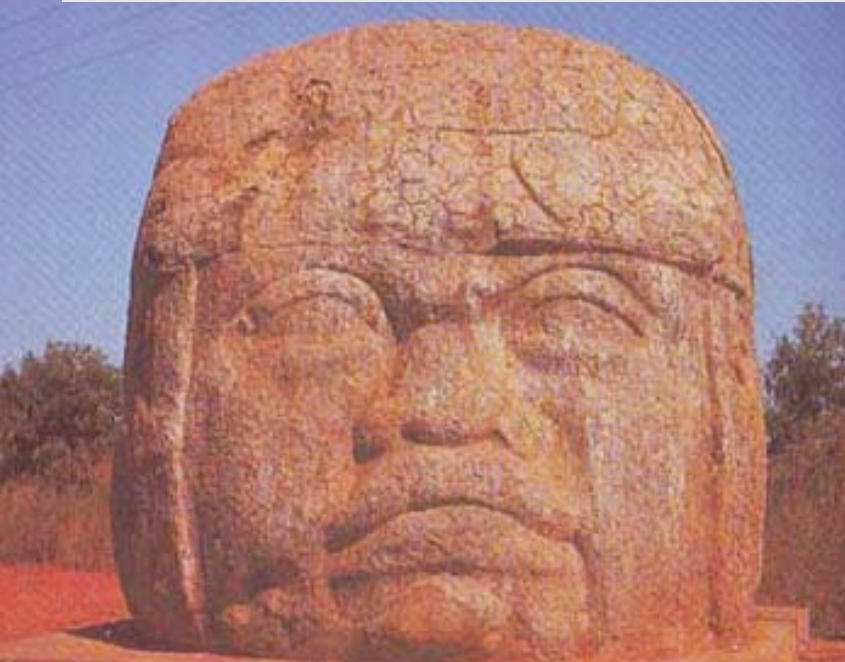


PRE-COLUMBIAN - Refers to various cultures and civilizations found throughout North and South America **before** the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492.

The Olmec

The Olmec were the first great civilization in Mexico (1200 B.C. to 500 A.D. approx.) The geographical area was the great coastal plain of the Gulf of Mexico.

Monumental Sculpture: Most surprising works include giant volcanic heads sculptures. They are thought to represent the severed heads of losers in a game called pelota. (Court-type sport involving a ball)



Olmec. Colossal Head, 1200 B.C. To 500 A.D., Basalt, Volcanic Rock (40 Tones) Mexico.



This mask may have once graced the tomb of an Olmec ruler.

Olmec Mask, Tabasco, Mexico. 800-400 B.C. Jadeite

/13 Name: _____

1. What does the term Pre-Columbian refer to? (1)

2. Make a sketch of the Colossal Head sculpted by the Olmec from 1200 B.C. - 500 A.D. and explain how heavy it was? (2)

3. What kind of mood/feeling do you get from his facial expression and why? (2)

4. Make a sketch of the Olmec Mask from 800-400 B.C. and explain what kind of mood/feeling do you get from this work and why? (3)

The Maya

They controlled vast lands that included what are now the **Yucatan, Guatemala** and **Honduras**. They never advanced technically beyond **Stone Age** but possessed highly developed skills in other areas.

They built their first cities by 320 A.D. and their civilization declined, revived and declined with the arrival of **Hernando Cortes** in 1519. The Spanish conquest completed the downfall of the **Maya** culture.



5. List three great accomplishments of the Mayans. (3)

1.

2.

3.

6. In what way was the Mayan culture influenced by their religious beliefs and what was the importance of ritualistic sacrifices? (2)

3 Major Accomplishments:

- 1) Great Builders - huge plazas
- 2) Devised an elaborate system of mathematics
- 3) Invented the most precise calendar in history

Mayan Culture - tied to Religious Beliefs

They believed that the gods created human beings through self sacrifice and the first people were formed by mixing maize (corn) with water and then brought to life by the gods. To repay this debt, human beings were required to continuously return blood to the gods. This was needed to make certain the gods would maintain their strength and nourishment. As a result most sacrificial rituals were characterized by efforts to secure blood for the gods. Captives taken in war were sacrificed in public ceremonies as well as Mayan rulers typically drew their own blood.

Mayan Cities: Architecture

Mayan cities were constructed with vast central plazas to accommodate the masses of people who gathered to witness these blood ceremonies.



Hernando Cortes

Female Dignitary. Relief Carving, Chiapas Tabasco Mexico. 650-750 A.D. Limestone.



Mayan Sculpture

Rich reliefs covered buildings and temples that were placed around plazas. This work shows a **royal priestess dressed** in rich costume and wearing an elaborate plumed headdress.

Temple of the Great Jaguar at Tikal, Guatemala - Towering pyramid built over the tomb of King Hasaw Chan K'awil.

Aztecs

When Cortes arrived in the New World in 1519 a people called the **Aztecs** had conquered a great deal of Mexico from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and as far south as Guatemala by 1521. They built a huge city called **Tenochtitlan** (present day Mexico City) that was built on an island in the lake.

Aztec Culture - tied to Religious Beliefs

Aztec's were warlike people driven to continuous combat by religious beliefs. They believed human sacrifice was necessary to keep the universe running smoothly and they thought the gods demanded human hearts. The priests at the great temple at **Tenochtitlan** were said to have sacrificed over 20 thousand people.



Codex Borbonicus. Painting of Tezcalipoca and Quetzalcoatl. Early 1500s.



Xipe Impersonator,
1450-1521.
Volcanic stone.

Aztec Sculpture

Art was closely linked to the bloody sacrificial rituals. Statues to the gods were carved on temples atop pyramids. This sculpture depicts a man perhaps a priest or celebrant dressed in the skins of flayed victims who have been sacrificed.

Aztec Painting

They had a system of picture writing done on sheets of parchments that were joined together like a book. These kinds of painted books, later called a **codex**. A **Codex** known as **The Book Of Days** from which personal destinies were predicted - painting illustrates Aztec deities **Tezcalipoca** (war god and night winds) and **Quetzalcoatl** (life god) **Quetzalcoatl** is shown as a feathered serpent who was a nature deity transformed into a national god

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NAME: _____

1. What did the Aztec believe was required of them to keep their universe running smoothly? (1)

2. Approximately how many people were sacrificed at the great temple of Tenochtitlan? (1)

3. Make a sketch of the Xipe Impersonator volcanic rock sculpture and explain what he is wearing. (2)

4. Look at the Aztec Codex Borbonicus from the early 1500s, what element/principle of design how does the artist use to emphasize the two figures in the foreground? (1)



Inca stone fitting.

The Incas: Art of Peru

They are best known of all ancient peoples who inhabited **Peru**. Between the 13th and 15th centuries **Inca** power grew until their empire stretched from **Quito** in **Equador** to central **Chile** (more than 3000 miles).

Inca Architecture

The **Incas** were skilled in the art of forming and fitting stone, **Inca** builders erected buildings that have survived to the present day. The durability of these structures is due to the precision with which each block of stone was fit into place.

Machu Picchu was an **Inca** city built to protect the people from hostile tribes living to the east. The city is dramatically perched on a ridge between two rugged mountain peaks 8000 feet above sea level. These buildings also constructed from huge stone blocks that were cut and locked into place with such skill that they have withstood earthquakes for centuries.

By the time the Spaniards under Francisco Pizarro reached **Peru** in 1532, the Inca Empire had been weakened by civil war and they fell easily to Pizarro.



The Inca Atahualpa and his warriors at Spanish conquerors arrive.

Engineering Accomplishments

Skillful engineers joined all parts of their empire together with a network of road and bridges. They established an efficient system of relay runners who moved these messages to every corner of the empire. Running in short spurts at breakneck speed, a series of couriers could cover 250 miles (250km) a day - faster than the speed of messengers on horseback galloping over the famous roads of Rome.

5. What is Machu Picchu? (1)

6. Where and why was Machu Picchu constructed? (2)



Inca Road System

7. How were the Inca able to courier a message over 250 miles in one day? (1)