

SSWH8: Describe the Diverse characteristics of societies in Central and South America



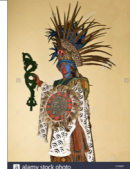
Element A: Explain the rise and fall of the Maya, Aztec, and Inca Empires.

SSWH8 Overview:

- Students will be expected to explain the rise and fall of the major medieval societies of Central and South America.
 - Students should be able to note similarities and differences in the development and characteristics of each civilization noting the role of geography in cultural diffusion and the role of regional ecology in their unique development.
 - Further, students are expected to explain how these societies changed over time as a result of interactions with neighbors and European conquerors.


Rise & Fall of the Mayan Empire

- Mayan Civilization emerged out of the cultural footprint left by the Olmec Civilization.
- Maize cultivation led to the development of villages that grew into urban centers around 800 BCE.
- Mayan civilization fully emerged by 250 CE.
- While the Mayan shared a common culture they never achieved political unity, instead approximately 40 independent city-states dominated the region from Southern Mexico to Honduras.
 - Some of the more powerful states exerted authority over smaller dependent states located nearby. The Mayan classical age lasted from about 250 CE to 900 CE.
- The Mayan Civilization decline began around 800 CE when many of the urban centers were abandoned.
 - The reasons for the Mayan decline are unclear.
 - Scholars suggest that possible causes could include volcanic activity, excessive warfare, disease, overpopulation, or soil exhaustion.
 - By 900 CE, most Mayan cities were abandoned and the population lived in villages led by tribal chiefs.



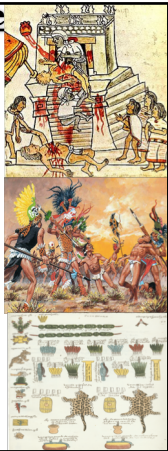
Rise of the Aztec Empire

- ❑ As Mayan culture faded in 800 CE, the Toltec rose in the valley of Mexico and dominated the region from about 800 to 1100.
- ❑ In the wake of the fall of the Toltec, the Aztecs migrated into the valley of Mexico where they struggled to integrate themselves among the urban agricultural societies surrounding Lake Texcoco in the heart of the valley of Mexico.
- ❑ In their early years in the valley, the Aztecs worked as farm laborers and mercenaries for their more powerful neighbors.
 - With time their strength grew and they founded twin capitals, Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco, on a small island in Lake Texcoco in 1325.
 - Around the same time the older tribal organization of leadership gave way to a monarchical system borrowed from neighboring societies.
 - This consolidation of leadership allowed the Aztecs to start the process of imperial conquests which began with agricultural lands around Lake Texcoco.
 - Once the Aztec capitals were economically secure, they formed an alliance with two powerful city-states located on the shores of the lake and began the process of building a vast tribute empire.




Rise of the Aztec Empire

- ❑ The development of this empire was motivated by several factors.
 - Like earlier civilizations of Mesoamerica, the Aztec religion required regular human sacrifice with the preferred victims being prisoners of war.
 - This need for sacrificial victims led to almost constant "flower wars" during which Aztecs would capture warriors from neighboring regions to deliver to the priests of Tenochtitlan for sacrifice.
 - Another motivation was the fact that political power and social status was based on the success of these campaigns.
 - Aztec emperors were compelled by tradition to legitimize their rule with successful wars of conquest.
 - While much of the Aztec nobility was hereditary, commoners and nobles alike could earn social promotion by successfully securing captives in battle.
 - Finally, these wars served an economic function by building a vast tribute empire that subsidized the cities of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco.
 - Subject people within the vast Aztec empire were required to send the capitals regular payments of maize, beans, cotton cloth, jade, gold and sacrificial victims.



Fall of the Aztec Empire

- ❑ In 1502 Montezuma II became the emperor of the Aztecs.
- ❑ By this point, the tribute demands that the Aztecs placed on their subjects was breeding resentment and instability.
- ❑ Montezuma instituted reforms to try and quell the unrest but this came too late.
- ❑ In 1519 Hernán Cortés arrived on the coast of Mexico with 600 conquistadors.
 - Shortly after arrival Cortés met La Malinche, a native woman who served as his translator.
 - With La Malinche's help, the Spanish learned of both the vast wealth in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan and the widespread anger among the Aztec subjects.
 - Cortés was able to use this anger to establish alliances with native armies as he marched toward the Aztec capital.
 - Cortés entered Tenochtitlan in 1521, claiming that he came in peace.
 - Montezuma may have initially welcomed Cortés into the capital because of rumors that he was the god Quetzalcoatl.
 - Aztec prophecies predicted Quetzalcoatl return and some may have believed that Cortés was the fulfillment of this prophecy.
- ❑ Once in the city, the Spanish took Montezuma hostage and began looting the palace.
- ❑ The Aztecs and their remaining allies were initially able to drive the Spanish from the city but their success was short lived.



Fall of the Aztec Empire

- ❑ The Spanish had several advantages that proved insurmountable to the Aztecs.
 - Native allies gave the Spanish a numeric advantage.
 - Smallpox, spread by the Spanish, devastated the densely populated cities of the valley of Mexico.
 - Steel weapons, horses, war dogs, guns, and armor also proved helpful to the Spanish in their defeat of the Aztecs.
- ❑ In August of 1521 the Spanish ended the Aztec Empire.



Rise of the Inca Empire

- ❑ The Incan Empire (more properly called Tawantinsuyu) grew out of the economic and cultural footprint of the Chaven (c. 900 BCE to 200 BCE), Moche (c. 100 to 800) and Wari (c. 500 to 1000) civilizations.
- ❑ In the early 1400s, the Inca were one of several competing military powers in the southern highlands of Peru.
 - In this early stage of their history, the Inca were organized into chiefdoms based on kinship groups.
- ❑ In about 1430 Wiraqocha Inca began to consolidate his power over these groups and established a hereditary monarchical system of government centered in Cuzco.
- ❑ Once firmly in power, Wiraqocha Inca began a period of imperial conquest that lasted until about 1525.
 - Early conquests by the Inca may have been motivated by drought or military threats from rival states to the west or south.
 - Over time, the motivation shifted to the desire to capture booty and eventually territory.
 - Pre-Incan civilizations of the Andean Region learned early on how to exploit the microclimates that range from the coast to the mountain valleys to the rainforests of the interior.
 - Incan imperial ambition was driven by the desire to take control of enough territory to allow the exploitation of all of these microclimates.



Rise of the Inca Empire

- ❑ The system of political legitimacy that justified the power of Incan emperors also motivated imperial conquest.
 - Upon an emperor's death political power would pass to the most able son but the wealth (mostly in the form of vast agricultural estates like Ollantaytambo) would pass to the rest of the family.
 - The family members that inherited the wealth were expected to use this wealth to maintain an elaborate cult around the mummy of the deceased emperor.
 - This system of split inheritance required each emperor to acquire wealth through the conquest of new territory.
- ❑ By 1525 the Inca built a vast empire bound together by a professional army and elaborate bureaucracy that managed affairs by dividing the empire into four parts and eight districts all unified by an extensive network of roads, storehouses, garrisons, and frontier forts.



Fall of the Inca Empire

- ❑ Smallpox arrived in the Andean region well before the Spanish in 1520s.
 - The disease caused political turmoil when it killed the emperor and led to a civil war.
 - When the war ended, Atahulpa became emperor but his hold on power remained tenuous.
- ❑ In 1530 Francisco Pizarro arrived with 180 Spanish Conquistadors.
 - He was able to use the political instability to his advantage and captured Atahulpa.
- ❑ Pizarro and his men executed Atahulpa which caused even greater political instability in the empire and allowed the Spanish to take the city of Cuzco in 1533.
 - By 1536, the Spanish defeated the last Incan rebellion and took control of the Inca's empire.