

**World History**  
**Objective 2.0:8**  
**Enrichment**

World History Objective 2.08: Lesson

Evaluate the achievements of the major civilizations of the Americas during the pre-Columbian epoch including, but not limited to, the Aztecs, Incas, and Mayas.

During the last Ice Age, early hunters and gatherers used a land bridge, connecting the Asian and North American continents, to follow herds of bison and caribou into North America.

Through the study of archaeology, we have learned of some of the societies that existed in early America. First came the Olmecs, followed by the Maya, and later the Azecs.

The Olmecs lived in the area north of Mexico City and farming was their major occupation. They also were involved in trade and their artisans made tools, weapons, pottery and jewelry. Obsidian, a volcanic glass, was used to make tools, mirrors and knives.

Far to the east, on the Yucatan Peninsula, the Mayan civilization developed. They built splendid temples and developed an accurate calendar. The Mayans also developed a sophisticated writing system based on hieroglyphs or pictures.

The Aztec developed a complex civilization with defined social structure including specific roles for boys and girls, art and architecture and a religion with a supreme god and many other gods. Their religion was based on an unending struggle between the forces of good and evil throughout the universe.

Far south of Mexico, centered [in what is now the country of Peru, the Incas built an empire that covered an area extending from modern day Columbia, to a point south of Santiago, Chile. The Incas were the best engineers among native American people, building roadways over mountains, tunnels and bridges.

Enrichment:

The two native American societies that existed at the end of the pre-Columbian period were the Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in Peru. Both made major contributions to civilization and had sophisticated social structures. Yet, both were relatively easily defeated by smaller armies of Spanish.

Your job is to find out why this occurred and to write a paper explaining what happened in each case to allow this to happen.

Your second assignment is to look at the religions of both the Aztecs and the Incas. What was there about these religions that was particularly abhorrent to the Spanish. To answer this, you must learn about both of these religions and about the Catholicism of Spain in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Write an explanation of what happened and why.