

**ELA: Grade 7, Lesson 2, Early American Civilizations**

**Lesson Focus:** Maya, Aztec, and Inca Civilizations

**Learning Objective:** Today we will learn about the geographical features and impact of Spanish conquests on the development of the Maya, Aztec, and Inca civilizations.

**TN Standards:** 7.RI.KID.1, 7.RI.KID.3, 7, 7.RI.CS.4, 7.RI.CS.5

**Teacher Materials:**

- ELA Grade 7, Lesson 2 Teacher Packet (will hold up images for students to see)
- Teacher Three-column chart from lesson 1

**Student Materials:**

- Piece of paper
- Pencil or pen
- Three-column chart from lesson 1

Teacher Do	Student Do
<p><b><u>Opening</u></b></p> <p><b>Hello! Welcome to Tennessee's At Home Learning Series for literacy! Today's lesson is for all our 7<sup>th</sup> graders out there, though all children are welcome to tune in. This lesson is the second in our series.</b></p> <p><b>My name is ____ and I'm a ____ grade teacher in Tennessee schools! I'm so excited to be your teacher for this lesson! Welcome to my virtual classroom!</b></p> <p><b>Today we will be learning about Early American Civilizations! Before we get started, to participate fully in our lesson today, you will need:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Something to write with and a surface to write on</li><li>• At least one piece of paper</li><li>• The three-column chart you made in our last lesson.</li></ul> <p><b>Remember, it looks like this. [Show image L1:A ]</b></p> <p><b>If you didn't see our previous lesson, you can find it at <a href="http://www.tn.gov/education">www.tn.gov/education</a>. You can still tune in to today's lesson if you haven't seen any of our others. But, it might be more fun if you first go back and watch our other lessons since we'll be talking about things we learned previously.</b></p> <p><b>Ok, let's begin!</b></p>	

<p><b><u>Intro</u></b> [Ask students the following]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Remember, we are working hard to understand how Ancient American civilizations used certain geographical features around them to survive and flourish. Do you remember which geographical feature we learned about in lesson 1? (Pause). Right, we specifically learned about rivers and how they helped these civilizations set up farming and get from place to place.</b></li> <li>● <b>What did we learn about animals? (Pause). Early civilizations domesticated animals. Other than for food sources, do you remember how these domesticated animals helped the people? (Pause) Yes, they helped them plow their fields and provided wool for their clothes.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>In today’s lesson, we will continue to learn more about the Maya, Aztec, and Inca. So, let's get started.</b></p>	<p>Students listen and respond to questions</p>
<p><b><u>Teacher Model</u></b> I’m going to begin reading where we left off in lesson 1, still in “The Rise of Early American Civilizations.” I want you to listen carefully as I read and pay attention to the <i>very unique locations</i> of the three early civilizations I just mentioned: the Maya, Aztec, and Inca.</p> <p>Teacher read aloud: <b>Mesoamerica: The Maya and the Aztec</b> Mesoamerica, or Middle America, was home to the Maya and the Aztec civilizations. This region lies north of the Equator in an area called the tropics. It includes a portion of present-day Mexico in North America and parts of Central America. It occupies much of the isthmus that joins the continents of North and South America. The present Central American countries of Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and northern Costa Rica are all part of Mesoamerica. Mesoamerica has very diverse landscapes, including dry coastal deserts and wet inland rainforests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● [Show image L1: B]. <b>So, this section of our text includes a LOT of places with long names, but I’d like you to focus just on this section here: Central America. [Point to the call-out on the map for Central America]. This is where the Maya and Aztec settled.</b></li> </ul>	<p>Students listen and responds (either orally or in writing) to posed questions.</p>

- Note that the landscape we're talking about today is very geographically diverse. What do you think that means? (Pause). Yes, the landscape includes many different geographic features, from mountains to plains, and rainforests to deserts.

Teacher read aloud:

The Yucatán Peninsula is surrounded by water on three sides. It lies between the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, and was home to many Maya. Warm, humid rainforests cover the southern part of the peninsula. Its lush vegetation supports animals as varied as jaguars, snakes, bats, monkeys, toucans, and quetzal birds. The northern part of the Yucatán is drier and has no rivers, only lakes and swamps. The Yucatán's thousands of deep cenotes supply fresh water to the area—water needed in order for settlements to develop. Maya descendants are still there, living alongside the ruins of the ancient civilization.

- Grab your paper. Jot down why you think the Maya chose the Yucatan Peninsula to settle? (Pause). You got it! The Yucatan Peninsula had lots of geographical features that supported permanent living for the Maya. For example, the peninsula is surrounded by water on three sides and has humid rainforests and lush vegetation that support many types of wildlife. The water was necessary for their settlements to develop.
- Let's add this to our three-column chart under Maya. [Model filling in your chart: Yucatan Peninsula, diverse landscape, water on three sides, rainforests *and* dry areas, descendants still live there among the ruins].

Teacher read aloud:

The Aztec created a magnificent empire with cities under one central government. This empire began north of the Yucatán Peninsula in the Valley of Mexico and extended across much of central Mexico. Surrounded by mountains and volcanoes, it was a land full of wildlife. The wildlife is still there, but only ruins of pyramids mark the landscape with the remains of the Aztec civilization.

- The text says that the Aztec created a magnificent empire, just north of the Yucatan Peninsula where the Maya settled, it was a place called the Valley of Mexico. So, a *magnificent empire*, huh? What do you think the word *empire* means? [Pause]. Great! It

means a group of people under the total control of one ruler or government. So, this means that Aztec cities were under the control of one central government. I think that seems pretty advanced for so long ago!

- The landscape, or geographical features are pretty different from what we learned about the Maya. What was the landscape like where the Aztec chose to settle? [Pause]. Yes, land surrounded by mountains and volcanoes! Wow! That's so cool!
- The text says, *"The wildlife is still there, but only ruins of pyramids mark the landscape with the remains of the Aztec civilization."* What do you think that means? [Pause]. I agree, I'm thinking that means that, unlike the Maya, the descendants of the Aztec no longer live in the place they first settled. The ruins of the Aztec's pyramids are all that still remain. Spoiler Alert...I think we'll be learning more about pyramids in upcoming lessons, so stay tuned!
- Okay, this is some pretty interesting information about the Aztecs, so let's add it to our three-column chart. Locate the heading for Aztec and let's get going. [Model filling in your chart: Valley of Mexico, empire, controlled by one central government, diverse landscape, water on three sides, and no descendants live there, only ruins].

Teacher read aloud:

#### **South America: The Inca**

The Inca civilization began high in the Andes Mountains of present-day Peru. It grew to include parts of Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. The landscape and climate vary greatly across this enormous stretch of land. Deserts and warm valleys lie beneath frigid snow-capped peaks. Llamas and alpacas are native to its mountain areas. These long-necked animals were domesticated to carry heavy loads and provide wool. Cougars and chinchillas also share this habitat with a wide variety of birds, amphibians, and fish.

- So, it seems as though the Inca civilization *began* high in the Andes Mountains, but grew significantly and spread out quite a bit over time. Like the Maya and Aztec, the Inca settled in a place with a variety of geographical features. Did you catch them? (Pause). Great! Like the Maya, they differ greatly because the

<p>Inca were so spread out...from snow-capped mountains to deserts and warm valleys.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We learned something really interesting about the Inca and the animals they domesticated. Don't forget, we learned about the word <i>domesticate</i> yesterday. It means to tame an animal so it can be around humans. So, what animals did the Inca domesticate? (Pause). Yep, the llama and alpaca! Both of them have thick wool to use for clothing, but are fantastic for hauling heavy loads, particularly up the steep mountains.</li> <li>• Okay, let's go back to our chart and add to our last column - Inca. [Model filling in your chart: Andes Mountains, spread out across lots of land, diverse landscape, snow-capped mountains, deserts, warm valleys, domesticated llamas and alpacas].</li> </ul>	
<p><b><u>Guided Practice (for the read-aloud above):</u></b></p> <p>Great work on your chart! Let's step back and take a look at as a whole. I'm finding that some of the things we wrote are the same or similar across two or more of the early civilizations. Let's take a few minutes to compare and contrast together. Feel free to circle or make notes as we go.</p> <p>[Model think-aloud on your chart]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I noticed that both the Maya and the Inca had very diverse landscapes.</li> <li>• I also notice that the Maya are the only early civilization that still live among their ruins.</li> <li>• I see that both the landscape for the Aztec and the Inca include mountains, but the Aztec alone includes volcanoes!</li> <li>• I see that the Aztec were the only ones that had developed a central government.</li> <li>• The Inca domesticated llamas and alpaca.</li> </ul> <p>Go ahead and take a few moments to see if there is anything else you notice. [Pause].</p>	<p>Students completes his/her three-column chart as teacher models.</p>
<p><b><u>Teacher Model</u></b></p> <p>Now that we've learned about <i>how</i> and <i>where</i> the Maya, Aztec, and Inca civilizations began, let's read about how</p>	<p>Student listen to read aloud. Students pause to reflect and add to</p>

**we've come to know so much about them even though they lived a long, long time ago.**

Teacher read aloud:

### **Clues to Past Civilizations**

**Archaeologists have discovered much of what we know about the Maya, the Aztec, and the Inca. Archaeologists study the remains of past civilizations. They survey the land where ancient people lived, test the soil, and take photographs. They also map out areas to excavate, or dig, for artifacts. Archaeologists use shovels, scoops, brushes, and sieves to search for evidence of past human activity. Flaked stone, ceramic shards, bones, and textiles all tell a story. Spanish letters and records also provide information about early American civilizations. Why were the Spanish in the Americas? Starting about 500 years ago, they came in search of riches. They were looking for gold and silver, spices and silk, adventure and conquest.**

- **That's so cool that we're able to learn so much about the past! So, what are the people called that study the remains of the past? (Pause). Yes, Archaeologists. They have a really neat, and important, job. Without their work, we wouldn't know so much about the past, including the history of the Maya, Aztec, and Inca.**
- **What do you think the author means by "Flaked stone, ceramic shards, bones, and textiles all tell a story."? [Pause]. Right! That these objects were left behind. They provide us with evidence, or give us proof, that tell a story about past human activity because ceramics and textiles were items that were made by people. Flaked stone and bones are evidence of life and the activities that people took part in.**

Teacher read aloud:

**Spanish Conquests in the Americas Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro—distant cousins—were two early Spanish explorers. They sailed on separate expeditions from Spain to the Americas in the early 1500s. These Spanish conquistadors, or conquerors, were both interested in more than riches. They wanted to establish colonies for the Spanish king. They brought with them advanced weapons, new animals, and, unfortunately, devastating European**

their 3 column chart when directed by teacher.

<p>diseases. Cortés conquered, or took control of, the Aztec Empire in present-day Mexico. Pizarro conquered the Inca in present-day Peru. The Spaniards imposed their language and religion on the native people. The Spanish wrote about their early experiences in the Americas. As you explore these chapters, you will learn about the history of these three pre-Columbian civilizations: the Maya, the Aztec, and the Inca.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now, what about the Spanish explorers! We know that their letters and records provide lots of information about American civilizations, especially about their search for riches. But, what happened to the Aztec and Inca at the hands of the Spanish conquistadors? (Pause). You're right, the Spanish conquered the Aztec <i>and</i> the Inca! They forced them to speak their language and to practice their religion. Because the Spanish wrote about their experiences with early Americans, we are able to learn what happened in the years that followed.</li> <li>• Let's add some final information from this section to our three-column chart. Let's start with the Aztec column [Model filling in your chart: conquered by Spanish]. Now, let's move to the Inca with the same information [model filling in your chart: conquered by Spanish].</li> <li>• I'd also like for us to add a small section at the bottom about the Spanish Conquests, like this [Model adding a heading below your chart called Spanish Conquests] Now, let's add some important information that will help you in just a bit. We discovered that the Spanish conquistadors... [Model filling in your chart: early 1500s, in search of gold and riches, also wanted to establish colonies for the Spanish king, brought: advanced weapons, new animals and European diseases, forced their language and religion, kept records of their experiences].</li> </ul> <p>Great job!</p>	
<p><u>Guided Practice</u></p> <p>Take a few moments to collect your thoughts about all you've learned today: the specific regions that the Maya, Aztec, and Inca settled, what those places provided them, and what they might be like today. You also learned about how archaeologists have helped us learn about these early</p>	

<p>civilizations as well as the impact of the Spanish conquistadors in the early 1500s.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Given the little bit of information you have at this point, which of the three early American civilizations is most interesting to you? Jot it down on the back of your chart. (Pause). Well, I'm going to keep my choice a secret, but I'm sure your choice is great.</li><li>• Make a few notes why you think this early American civilization is interesting. What is it that intrigues you the most? What do you hope to find out about them as we continue our lessons? (Pause). I'm so excited for you to learn more about all three, but super excited for you to dig in for the one you've chosen!</li></ul>	
<p><b><u>Independent Practice</u></b></p> <p>Assume the role of an archeologist. You have a meeting scheduled with a reporter that is writing a story about the most recent findings from your early civilization archeological dig (insert: Maya, Aztec, or Inca...you choose).</p> <p>Create a list of talking points that you want to make sure that you share during your meeting with the reporter. Be sure to emphasize how your chosen civilization settled where it did, along with the specifics of their territory and how it differed from the other two early civilizations. Depending on the civilization you choose, you might even be able to include how the Spanish conquests impacted the lives of those people.</p> <p>End your list with a brief summary that the reporter can use in his or her story.</p>	<p>Students complete a list of talking points and summary.</p>
<p><b><u>Closing</u></b></p> <p>I've really enjoyed learning some cool things about Early American Civilizations with you today! Thank you for inviting me into your home. I look forward to seeing you in our next lesson in Tennessee's At Home Learning Series! Bye!</p>	