



# Art

## Aztec Art

Year 6 Unit 2

### Key Vocabulary:

#### Core Knowledge

Mesoamerican	Aztecs were a Mesoamerican culture. It is a historical region and cultural area in southern North America and most of Central America.
Toltecat	The Aztec word for art
Symbolism	Symbolism is the idea that things represent other things.
Amanteca	Aztec crafts people who worked with feathers. They were among the most respected craftspeople in the empire.

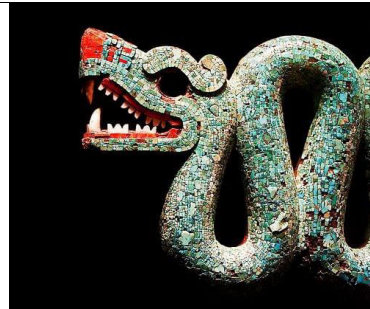
#### Technical Vocabulary

Printmaking	The activity of making pictures or designs by printing them from specially prepared plates or blocks.
Collagraph Printing	Collagraph comes from the Greek 'colla', meaning glue, and 'graph,' meaning to draw. A collagraph is essentially a collage of materials of various textures glued on to a printing plate.

### Key Works of Art



Aztec sun stone



Aztec double headed serpent



Fired-clay Mictlantecuhtli Statue



Aztec symbols

## Cultural Knowledge

### **Aztec Empire Art**

Art was an important part of Aztec life. They used some forms of art such as music, poetry, and sculpture to honour and praise their gods. Other forms of art, such as jewellery and feather-work, were worn by the Aztec nobility to set them apart from the commoners.

### **Metaphors**

The Aztecs often used metaphors throughout their art. For example, the hummingbird represented the sun god, the eagle represented the warrior, and flowers represented the beauty of life. Metaphors like these were used in their drawings, sculpture, and poetry.

### **Poetry**

The highest form of art in the Aztec culture was poetry. The Aztecs wrote lots of poems. Many of their poems were about the gods and mythology, but others were about everyday life. They called poetry "flower and song". The poetry and stories of the Aztecs were passed down verbally from generation to generation. They didn't begin to write down their poetry until after the Spanish arrived.

### **Music**

The Aztecs also enjoyed music. They played various instruments such as flutes, shells, whistles, and drums. They played their music for the gods and used it to make requests such as asking the gods for rain or for the harvest to be good.

### **Sculpture**

The Aztecs carved a lot of sculpture from stone of all types. They carved small items as well as huge statues of their gods that were placed in public areas and the temples. A lot of their sculpture had similar features. Male statues were usually shown sitting with their knees up and their arms crossed. Female statues were generally shown kneeling with their hands on their knees. The facial features were often similar with the main differences being symbols that were unique to each god.

### **Pottery**

The Aztecs took pride in creating a variety of beautiful pottery. Other nations from around the lands often traded for the prized Aztec pottery. They made everything from small simple bowls to tall jars that were heavily decorated and painted. The pottery makers of the Aztecs were very sophisticated, mass producing pottery in large shops using a potter's wheel. Every 52 years the Aztecs destroyed all their household items in a religious ceremony. This included their pottery. Archaeologists can track changes in Aztec pottery over time because of this.

### **Feather-work**

Perhaps the most prized art during the time of the Aztecs was feather-work. Using this art form, artisans wove brightly coloured feathers together to make beautiful cloaks and headdresses. Only the nobility and wealthy were allowed to wear feather-work items.

### **Jewellery**

The Aztecs also made a variety of jewellery. Jewellers used varied materials including gold, silver, copper, jade, and obsidian. Jewellery made from precious stones and metals was reserved for the nobility.