



History

The Aztecs (1300 – 1521)

Year 6 Unit 2

Intent:

This unit provides an overview of a non-European civilisation – showing where it developed, when it developed, and how it relates to a broadly based chronological understanding of the past. Through the activities that follow, pupils will learn about the main features of Aztec society, identify the roles of people in the Aztec community, the calendar system, the importance of warfare, and consequences of the Spanish conquest. Aside from learning about Aztec culture, this unit will encourage pupils to move away from the tendency in applying their own cultural values in judging the behaviour and beliefs of people raised in other cultures. Instead, pupils will be aware of the different ways of doing things and the complexity of human life. Pupils will be encouraged to establish clear comparisons between the early civilisations and relate them to their broader context. This unit aims to provide pupils with a fascinating glimpse at a way of life radically different to their own, yet one that, by the actions of the conquistadors, is inextricably linked to the European world.

Pupils should be taught to:

Study a non-European society that continues to develop a chronologically secure knowledge of world history.
 They should construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information and understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.
 Investigate and interpret the past.
 Build an overview of world history.
 Communicate historically.
 Understand chronology (the concepts of change over time).

Prior learning:

ELG	Year 2	Year 3	Year 5		
Builds on Past & Present	Builds on Stone Age, Iron Age & Bronze Age	Builds on The Ancient Greeks	Builds on The Ancient Egyptians		

Key Vocabulary:

Tier 2 - Multiple meanings or high frequency

Culture	Compare	Society	Civilisation	Community
Belief	Warfare	Invade	Chronology	Consequence

Tier 3 - Subject specific

Aztec	Legend	Nomad	Originate
Conquer	Mexico	Conquistador	Spanish conquest

Etymology and morphology

Prefix / Suffix / Root	Meaning	Examples
Aztec	Aztec "one of the native people who dominated the central highlands of Mexico in 1519 at the time of the Spanish invasion, 1787, from Spanish Azteca , from Nahuatl aztecatl (plural aztecah), meaning "coming from Aztlan," name of their legendary place of origin, usually said to lie somewhere in what is now south western U.S.	
Conquistador	"A conqueror," especially "one of the 16c. Spanish conquerors of Mexico and Peru," 1830, from	Conquer, conquest, conqueror.

	Spanish conquistador, literally "conqueror," noun of action from conquistar "to conquer".	
Culture	The ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society.	Cultural
Society	The community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws, and organisations.	Social

Idioms and colloquialisms	
	Meaning

Misconceptions	
Not true	Teach this
The name Aztecs was given to them after the fact.	We all know the Aztecs by that name, but it was not actually a name that they ever called themselves. The Westerners who came up with the name Aztecs likely took it from one of the original places that the Aztecs lived around the twelfth century, called Aztlan, which was in the Northern part of Mexico. However, the Aztecs themselves actually referred to themselves as Mexica, which is actually where the name for the country of Mexico originally came from.

Lesson number	Key enquiry question & learning objective	Suggested learning activities	Cumulative questions
1	<p>Q: What do we know about the Aztecs</p> <p>L.O. TBAT understand chronology.</p>	<p>*(Show a selection of foods from Mexico, e.g. chillies, chocolate, tomatoes, tortillas. Talk about where they all originated from and how they came to this country).</p> <p>*Discuss what we already know about Aztecs in groups and share information – create a mind map (this can be added to at the end of the unit).</p> <p>Introduction to the Aztec Empire - KS2 History - BBC Bitesize</p> <p>*Find Mexico on the map/globe.</p> <p>*Create own timeline - use books/research to find information for timeline.</p>	1 - 3
2	<p>Q: Why did the Aztecs choose to settle where they did?</p> <p>L.O. TBAT investigate and interpret the past.</p>	<p>*Watch the Legend of the Eagle and the Serpent: https://video.link/w/lvZKc</p> <p>Explain to the children that they will be watching a legend about the Aztec. Tell students to listen to find out why the Aztecs chose a particular place to make their home.</p> <p>*Look at the <i>Aztec gods</i> matching activity and consider what they may tell us about Aztec beliefs etc...</p> <p>Aztec gods (primaryresources.co.uk) Download Teaching Resources (tes.com)</p> <p>Groups/individuals could research other Aztec gods. They can record their observations as notes or sketches and then present their findings to the class in a format of their choosing.</p>	4 - 6
3	<p>Q: What was the significance of Tenochtitlan?</p> <p>L.O. TBAT build an overview of world history.</p>	<p>Consider why the Aztecs built in the middle of a lake – this should produce some good discussion. Discuss and make a list of pros and cons.</p> <p>Create your own version of the beautiful 1524 map of Tenochtitlan.</p>	7 - 8
4	<p>Q: What is it?</p> <p>L.O. TBAT investigate and interpret the past.</p>	<p>* Give children a copy of the image showing the Aztec calendar. Complete the ‘My Object’ question sheet answering all the questions. Research if necessary.</p> <p>*Create a sun stone calendar: Make an Aztec Sunstone - How did the Aztec Calendar Work? (twinkl.co.uk)</p>	9 - 12

		Explore the Aztec sunstone on this great site and find out more here . (You could either make a paper/card version, or even better, make one out of clay!)	
5	<p>Q: Who were the Conquistadors?</p> <p>L.O. TBAT communicate historically.</p>	<p>*In the 16th Century, Spanish Conquistadors, led by Hernán Cortés, began to colonise the Americas, conquering Aztec lands in the process. The Conquistadors believed that the Aztecs were inferior to them in culture, religion and technology.</p> <p>*Research and write a persuasive argument using what you know about the Aztec civilisation to prove this belief ignorant, as we know it to be today. Think about the types of persuasive techniques and powerful vocabulary you could include to emphasise your points. Use facts to justify your arguments.</p>	1, 13 - 15
6	<p>Q: What happened next?</p> <p>L.O. TBAT understand chronology (the concepts of change over time).</p>	<p>* Look at some of the things that the Spanish brought from Europe to Mexico chocolate, tomatoes, chillies, coffee, turkey etc...)</p> <p>Have a tasting day!</p> <p>*Discuss the legacy of the Aztecs – Compare the Aztec festival of the Dead with the modern Mexican Day of the Dead. Consider similarities and differences.</p>	16 - 18