

## GEOGRAPHY OF ANCIENT AMERICAS

1. What two mountain ranges are in North America?

---

2. What does “Mesoamerica” mean?

---

3. What river flows through South America?

---

4. What word can be used to describe the geography of the Americas?

---

## THE OLMECS

1. Name the “mother” civilization of Mesoamerica.

---

2. What is a theocracy ?

---

3. Who was at the bottom of the Olmec social class pyramid?

---

4. How did roads help the Olmec people?

---

## THE MAYA

1. Did the Maya come before or after the Olmec?

---

2. How did the Maya use their calendar?

---

3. What is a cenote?

---

4. What kind of writing did the Maya use?

---

## THE AZTECS

1. What is Tenochtitlan?

---

2. Why did the Aztecs sacrifice people?

---

3. How did the Aztecs get rich?

---

4. Were the Aztecs monotheistic or polytheistic?

---

## THE INCA

1. Where did the Inca live?

---

2. Who was Pachacuti?

---

3. What were quipu?

---

4. How were the Inca similar to the Aztecs, Olmecs, and Maya?

---

---

## GEOGRAPHY OF THE SOUTHWEST

1. Who were the Anasazi?

---

2. What mountains are in the Southwest?

---

3. What crops were grown by the Anasazi?

---

4. What is irrigation?

---

## THE ANASAZI

1. Where did the Anasazi live?

---

2. What is a pueblo?

---

3. What crops were grown by the Anasazi?

---

4. Why did the Anasazi leave their homes?

---

## Geography of the Ancient Americas

The ancient Americas can be broken into three parts: North America, Mesoamerica, and South America.

North America is where the United States and Canada exist today. This land is varied, meaning it is very different in different places. The Appalachian Mountains run on the eastern side of North America, while the Rocky Mountains are in the west. In between these two mountain ranges you will find the Great Plains, an area of flat land. In southwestern North America the land is dry and arid and has deserts. Traveling as far north as Canada, one will find cold, icy conditions, even glaciers.

Mesoamerica means “the middle of America.” This is because Mesoamerica is in between North America and South America. The present day countries that are part of Mesoamerica are Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. For a smaller area of land, the geography of Mesoamerica is very diverse. Diverse means different. In the southern part of Mesoamerica there are volcanoes. Volcanoes produce kinds of stones called basalt and obsidian. There are also mountain ranges in Mesoamerica called the Sierra Madres. The climate in Mesoamerica is as different as its landscape. Some places get a lot of rain, while some places are almost like deserts and get no rain.

South America also has mountains like Mesoamerica. The most famous mountain range in South America is the Andes. There is also a famous river in South America called the Amazon. It is the second longest river in the world. The Amazon River flows through the Amazon rainforest.

## Geography of the Ancient Americas

The ancient Americas can be broken into three parts: North America, Mesoamerica, and South America.

North America is where the United States and Canada exist today. This land is varied, meaning it is very different in different places. The Appalachian Mountains run on the eastern side of North America, while the Rocky Mountains are in the west. In between these two mountain ranges you will find the Great Plains, an area of flat land. In southwestern North America the land is dry and arid and has deserts. Traveling as far north as Canada, one will find cold, icy conditions, even glaciers.

Mesoamerica means “the middle of America.” This is because Mesoamerica is in between North America and South America. The present day countries that are part of Mesoamerica are Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. For a smaller area of land, the geography of Mesoamerica is very diverse. Diverse means different. In the southern part of Mesoamerica there are volcanoes. Volcanoes produce kinds of stones called basalt and obsidian. There are also mountain ranges in Mesoamerica called the Sierra Madres. The climate in Mesoamerica is as different as its landscape. Some places get a lot of rain, while some places are almost like deserts and get no rain.

South America also has mountains like Mesoamerica. The most famous mountain range in South America is the Andes. There is also a famous river in South America called the Amazon. It is the second longest river in the world. The Amazon River flows through the Amazon rainforest.

## The Olmecs

The “mother” civilization of Mesoamerica was that of the Olmecs. The Olmecs were the first great civilization in Mesoamerica, and the Mayas and Aztecs would follow them.

Like the Mayas and the Aztecs, the Olmecs had a government called a theocracy. This means the Olmecs thought their leaders were gods. These leaders were at the top of the social class system. Also at the top were the priests and other government workers. In the middle of the social class pyramid were the merchants and craftspeople. The lowest social class of the Olmecs was the farmers. Most Olmec people were farmers. The farmers grew crops like corn, beans, and squash.

Like modern civilizations, the Olmecs used roads. The roads connected different villages and made it easier for people to travel. This meant that Olmecs could use the road to travel and trade their goods. Because there were volcanoes in the area where the Olmecs lived, there were special rocks there called basalt and obsidian. Another highly prized stone was jade. The Olmecs traded for these stones.

The Olmecs were an advanced civilization that had many accomplishments. They developed a number system so they could do math. They also made a calendar and had a system of writing.

## The Olmecs

The “mother” civilization of Mesoamerica was that of the Olmecs. The Olmecs were the first great civilization in Mesoamerica, and the Mayas and Aztecs would follow them.

Like the Mayas and the Aztecs, the Olmecs had a government called a theocracy. This means the Olmecs thought their leaders were gods. These leaders were at the top of the social class system. Also at the top were the priests and other government workers. In the middle of the social class pyramid were the merchants and craftspeople. The lowest social class of the Olmecs was the farmers. Most Olmec people were farmers. The farmers grew crops like corn, beans, and squash.

Like modern civilizations, the Olmecs used roads. The roads connected different villages and made it easier for people to travel. This meant that Olmecs could use the road to travel and trade their goods. Because there were volcanoes in the area where the Olmecs lived, there were special rocks there called basalt and obsidian. Another highly prized stone was jade. The Olmecs traded for these stones.

The Olmecs were an advanced civilization that had many accomplishments. They developed a number system so they could do math. They also made a calendar and had a system of writing.

## The Maya

The Maya were a group of people that came after the Olmec. Like the Olmec, they were an advanced civilization that lived in Mesoamerica. Two famous cities of the Maya were Tikal and Chichen Itza. Both these places had observatories to view the stars, palaces for the rulers, baths for the people, and aqueducts to carry water. Like the Olmec, the Maya were interested in astronomy and had a calendar. They used the calendar to tell the days people were born and married, to tell of special holidays, and to tell of days they won battles. The Mayan calendar had 365 days, just like ours. The Maya also used the calendar to tell when to plant their crops. They farmed corn, beans, and squash. Like the Olmec, the Maya also had a writing system, but theirs was even more complicated. The Maya used hieroglyphics, like the Egyptians.

In Chichen Itza, there are two large cenotes. Cenotes are sinkholes. Sinkholes are giant, round holes in the ground that fill with water. Archaeologists believe these cenotes were sacred to the Maya because they were a place where people could get water. Archaeologists also believe the Maya tried to communicate to their gods through the cenotes. The Maya would throw baskets, cloth, benches, jewelry, and even people into the cenotes.

Like the Olmec, the Maya also had a government called a theocracy. The Mayan ruler was at the top of the Mayan social class system. There were many things about the Maya that were similar to the Olmec.

## The Maya

The Maya were a group of people that came after the Olmec. Like the Olmec, they were an advanced civilization that lived in Mesoamerica. Two famous cities of the Maya were Tikal and Chichen Itza. Both these places had observatories to view the stars, palaces for the rulers, baths for the people, and aqueducts to carry water. Like the Olmec, the Maya were interested in astronomy and had a calendar. They used the calendar to tell the days people were born and married, to tell of special holidays, and to tell of days they won battles. The Mayan calendar had 365 days, just like ours. The Maya also used the calendar to tell when to plant their crops. They farmed corn, beans, and squash. Like the Olmec, the Maya also had a writing system, but theirs was even more complicated. The Maya used hieroglyphics, like the Egyptians.

In Chichen Itza, there are two large cenotes. Cenotes are sinkholes. Sinkholes are giant, round holes in the ground that fill with water. Archaeologists believe these cenotes were sacred to the Maya because they were a place where people could get water. Archaeologists also believe the Maya tried to communicate to their gods through the cenotes. The Maya would throw baskets, cloth, benches, jewelry, and even people into the cenotes.

Like the Olmec, the Maya also had a government called a theocracy. The Mayan ruler was at the top of the Mayan social class system. There were many things about the Maya that were similar to the Olmec.

## The Aztecs

Like the Maya and the Olmecs, the Aztecs also farmed corn, beans, and squash. They were also great builders and scientists.

Aztec civilization began in the 1300's when a group of people called the Mexica settled on two swamp islands on Lake Texcoco. This settlement eventually turned into a city called Tenochtitlan. Eventually, this city got so big that the Mexica had to build islands for people to live on. These man-made islands were called chinampas. All of the islands were connected by bridges called causeways. Causeways are long, skinny pieces of land that connect the islands together. Once Tenochtitlan got very big, the Mexica people started calling themselves "Aztecs."

Like the Olmecs and the Maya, the Aztecs had a theocracy. They believed their leaders represented the gods. One ruler of the Aztecs was Moctezuma I. He was such a good ruler that he made the Aztec territory even bigger. When the Aztecs conquered more land, they made the people they conquered pay them taxes. The taxes helped the Aztecs get rich. It also helped that young, Aztec men were trained warriors. This made it easier for the Aztecs to win battles and conquer new lands.

The Olmecs, Maya, and Aztecs were all polytheistic. This means they worshipped many gods. The Aztecs believed certain gods controlled the weather. Since farming corn, beans, and squash was important to them, they prayed to the gods to help them grow a lot of food. One of these gods was called Quetzalcoatl. The Aztecs believed they had to do certain things to please the gods, or the gods wouldn't help them. One thing they believed in was human sacrifice. This is when one human kills another in honor of the gods. The Aztecs sacrificed a lot of prisoners, but they also sacrificed women, children, and slaves.

## The Aztecs

Like the Maya and the Olmecs, the Aztecs also farmed corn, beans, and squash. They were also great builders and scientists.

Aztec civilization began in the 1300's when a group of people called the Mexica settled on two swamp islands on Lake Texcoco. This settlement eventually turned into a city called Tenochtitlan. Eventually, this city got so big that the Mexica had to build islands for people to live on. These man-made islands were called chinampas. All of the islands were connected by bridges called causeways. Causeways are long, skinny pieces of land that connect the islands together. Once Tenochtitlan got very big, the Mexica people started calling themselves "Aztecs."

Like the Olmecs and the Maya, the Aztecs had a theocracy. They believed their leaders represented the gods. One ruler of the Aztecs was Moctezuma I. He was such a good ruler that he made the Aztec territory even bigger. When the Aztecs conquered more land, they made the people they conquered pay them taxes. The taxes helped the Aztecs get rich. It also helped that young, Aztec men were trained warriors. This made it easier for the Aztecs to win battles and conquer new lands.

The Olmecs, Maya, and Aztecs were all polytheistic. This means they worshipped many gods. The Aztecs believed certain gods controlled the weather. Since farming corn, beans, and squash was important to them, they prayed to the gods to help them grow a lot of food. One of these gods was called Quetzalcoatl. The Aztecs believed they had to do certain things to please the gods, or the gods wouldn't help them. One thing they believed in was human sacrifice. This is when one human kills another in honor of the gods. The Aztecs sacrificed a lot of prisoners, but they also sacrificed women, children, and slaves.

## The Inca

The Inca were a group of people that lived in South America. They were similar to the people in Mesoamerica in many ways, but they lived in a very different land.

The Inca lived in a mountain range called the Andes. Their empire was huge. One man, an emperor named Pachacuti built a strong army. His army conquered many new lands and made the Inca Empire even bigger. In honor of all his army's victories, Pachacuti build many great buildings. Eventually, Pachacuti's son became emperor, and he made the Inca Empire even bigger. It might have been very hard to rule such a large empire, but the Incas were smart. The Inca Empire was divided into provinces and each province was ruled by a governor.

Unlike the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec, the Inca did not have a system of writing. Instead, they used something called quipu to keep important records. Quipu were knots on a rope. The ropes were different lengths and colors. The lengths, colors, and knots stood for things like numbers, objects, and distances.

Like the Aztecs, the Inca also built roads. The roads were built for the government and the military. Regular citizens were not allowed to use them. Anyone who used the road illegally or damaged an Incan road was punished by death. Like the Aztecs and the Maya, the Inca were also polytheistic. This means they worshipped many gods. Their government was also a theocracy, meaning the people thought their leaders represented the gods.

## The Inca

The Inca were a group of people that lived in South America. They were similar to the people in Mesoamerica in many ways, but they lived in a very different land.

The Inca lived in a mountain range called the Andes. Their empire was huge. One man, an emperor named Pachacuti built a strong army. His army conquered many new lands and made the Inca Empire even bigger. In honor of all his army's victories, Pachacuti build many great buildings. Eventually, Pachacuti's son became emperor, and he made the Inca Empire even bigger. It might have been very hard to rule such a large empire, but the Incas were smart. The Inca Empire was divided into provinces and each province was ruled by a governor.

Unlike the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec, the Inca did not have a system of writing. Instead, they used something called quipu to keep important records. Quipu were knots on a rope. The ropes were different lengths and colors. The lengths, colors, and knots stood for things like numbers, objects, and distances.

Like the Aztecs, the Inca also built roads. The roads were built for the government and the military. Regular citizens were not allowed to use them. Anyone who used the road illegally or damaged an Incan road was punished by death. Like the Aztecs and the Maya, the Inca were also polytheistic. This means they worshipped many gods. Their government was also a theocracy, meaning the people thought their leaders represented the gods.

## The Geography of the Southwest

The Anasazi were a group of Native American people that lived in the Southwestern part of the United States. The Southwest is the area in the United States that now includes New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah. This area has a lot of desert. This means it gets very little rainfall and has very little vegetation. Vegetation means “plants.” Because there aren’t a lot of plants, there aren’t a lot of animals because they don’t have plants to eat. Temperatures in the Southwest can get very hot during the day and can get very cold at night.

The Southwest also has mountains and plateaus. A famous mountain range in the Southwest is the Rockies are a mountain range found in the Southwest.

Even though the Southwest is land that is arid and dry, the Anasazi still lived there and farmed there. This was not easy because there wasn’t a lot of water for the crops. Still, the Anasazi grew corn, beans, and squash, just like the Olmecs, Aztecs, and Maya. To grow these crops they had to use irrigation. Irrigation is when people transport water from one area to their crops. The Anasazi got their water from the Gila and Salt rivers. They built dams which held water in one place. They also built canals which directed water from one place to another.

Once the Anasazi were able to farm the land where they lived, they were able to settle into one place. After everyone settled in one place, villages began to form.

## The Geography of the Southwest

The Anasazi were a group of Native American people that lived in the Southwestern part of the United States. The Southwest is the area in the United States that now includes New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah. This area has a lot of desert. This means it gets very little rainfall and has very little vegetation. Vegetation means “plants.” Because there aren’t a lot of plants, there aren’t a lot of animals because they don’t have plants to eat. Temperatures in the Southwest can get very hot during the day and can get very cold at night.

The Southwest also has mountains and plateaus. A famous mountain range in the Southwest is the Rockies are a mountain range found in the Southwest.

Even though the Southwest is land that is arid and dry, the Anasazi still lived there and farmed there. This was not easy because there wasn’t a lot of water for the crops. Still, the Anasazi grew corn, beans, and squash, just like the Olmecs, Aztecs, and Maya. To grow these crops they had to use irrigation. Irrigation is when people transport water from one area to their crops. The Anasazi got their water from the Gila and Salt rivers. They built dams which held water in one place. They also built canals which directed water from one place to another.

Once the Anasazi were able to farm the land where they lived, they were able to settle into one place. After everyone settled in one place, villages began to form.

## The Anasazi

The Anasazi were a group of people that lived in the Southwest United States from about 100 CE to 1300 CE. The Anasazi are known for the kind of buildings they constructed, pueblos. The Anasazi are the ancestors of group of people called Pueblo people. The Pueblo people were named after their architecture, or buildings.

A pueblo is a building made out adobe. Adobe bricks are made from sun-dried mud. In the Southwest, there was plenty of soil and sun to be turned into adobe. Pueblos were often built into the sides of cliffs, or mountains. Building in the sides of mountains provided people with extra shelter from the harsh climate of the Southwest. Pueblos were often two or more stories tall, meaning they looked like apartment complexes. Many people lived in pueblos. The biggest pueblo was found in Chaco Canyon. It had more than 800 rooms and more than 1000 people lived there.

The Anasazi were excellent farmers and craftsmen. You already know that they were able to farm corn, squash, and beans, in spite of the lack of water and high and low temperatures in the Southwest. As craftsmen they made pottery and baskets, many of which helped them store food. Anasazi craftsmen also made beautiful jewelry out of turquoise, a blue stone.

Sadly, many of the Anasazi had to leave their homes because of a drought. A drought is when there is a shortage of rain. When there is no rain it is hard for crops to survive. During this drought, many people died and many others moved to a new place.

## The Anasazi

The Anasazi were a group of people that lived in the Southwest United States from about 100 CE to 1300 CE. The Anasazi are known for the kind of buildings they constructed, pueblos. The Anasazi are the ancestors of group of people called Pueblo people. The Pueblo people were named after their architecture, or buildings.

A pueblo is a building made out adobe. Adobe bricks are made from sun-dried mud. In the Southwest, there was plenty of soil and sun to be turned into adobe. Pueblos were often built into the sides of cliffs, or mountains. Building in the sides of mountains provided people with extra shelter from the harsh climate of the Southwest. Pueblos were often two or more stories tall, meaning they looked like apartment complexes. Many people lived in pueblos. The biggest pueblo was found in Chaco Canyon. It had more than 800 rooms and more than 1000 people lived there.

The Anasazi were excellent farmers and craftsmen. You already know that they were able to farm corn, squash, and beans, in spite of the lack of water and high and low temperatures in the Southwest. As craftsmen they made pottery and baskets, many of which helped them store food. Anasazi craftsmen also made beautiful jewelry out of turquoise, a blue stone.

Sadly, many of the Anasazi had to leave their homes because of a drought. A drought is when there is a shortage of rain. When there is no rain it is hard for crops to survive. During this drought, many people died and many others moved to a new place.

## Geography of the Ancient Americas

The ancient Americas can be broken into three parts: North America, Mesoamerica, and South America.

North America is where the United States and Canada exist today. This land is varied, meaning it is very different in different places. The Appalachian Mountains run on the eastern side of North America, while the Rocky Mountains are in the west. In between these two mountain ranges you will find the Great Plains, an area of flat land. In southwestern North America the land is dry and arid and has deserts. Traveling as far north as Canada, one will find cold, icy conditions, even glaciers.

Mesoamerica means “the middle of America.” This is because Mesoamerica is in between North America and South America. The present day countries that are part of Mesoamerica are Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. For a smaller area of land, the geography of Mesoamerica is very diverse. Diverse means different. In the southern part of Mesoamerica there are volcanoes. Volcanoes produce kinds of stones called basalt and obsidian. There are also mountain ranges in Mesoamerica called the Sierra Madres. The climate in Mesoamerica is as different as its landscape. Some places get a lot of rain, while some places are almost like deserts and get no rain.

South America also has mountains like Mesoamerica. The most famous mountain range in South America is the Andes. There is also a famous river in South America called the Amazon. It is the second longest river in the world. The Amazon River flows through the Amazon rainforest.

## Geography of the Ancient Americas

The ancient Americas can be broken into three parts: North America, Mesoamerica, and South America.

North America is where the United States and Canada exist today. This land is varied, meaning it is very different in different places. The Appalachian Mountains run on the eastern side of North America, while the Rocky Mountains are in the west. In between these two mountain ranges you will find the Great Plains, an area of flat land. In southwestern North America the land is dry and arid and has deserts. Traveling as far north as Canada, one will find cold, icy conditions, even glaciers.

Mesoamerica means “the middle of America.” This is because Mesoamerica is in between North America and South America. The present day countries that are part of Mesoamerica are Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. For a smaller area of land, the geography of Mesoamerica is very diverse. Diverse means different. In the southern part of Mesoamerica there are volcanoes. Volcanoes produce kinds of stones called basalt and obsidian. There are also mountain ranges in Mesoamerica called the Sierra Madres. The climate in Mesoamerica is as different as its landscape. Some places get a lot of rain, while some places are almost like deserts and get no rain.

South America also has mountains like Mesoamerica. The most famous mountain range in South America is the Andes. There is also a famous river in South America called the Amazon. It is the second longest river in the world. The Amazon River flows through the Amazon rainforest.

## The Olmecs

The “mother” civilization of Mesoamerica was that of the Olmecs. The Olmecs were the first great civilization in Mesoamerica, and the Mayas and Aztecs would follow them.

Like the Mayas and the Aztecs, the Olmecs had a government called a theocracy. This means the Olmecs thought their leaders were gods. These leaders were at the top of the social class system. Also at the top were the priests and other government workers. In the middle of the social class pyramid were the merchants and craftspeople. The lowest social class of the Olmecs was the farmers. Most Olmec people were farmers. The farmers grew crops like corn, beans, and squash.

Like modern civilizations, the Olmecs used roads. The roads connected different villages and made it easier for people to travel. This meant that Olmecs could use the road to travel and trade their goods. Because there were volcanoes in the area where the Olmecs lived, there were special rocks there called basalt and obsidian. Another highly prized stone was jade. The Olmecs traded for these stones.

The Olmecs were an advanced civilization that had many accomplishments. They developed a number system so they could do math. They also made a calendar and had a system of writing.

## The Olmecs

The “mother” civilization of Mesoamerica was that of the Olmecs. The Olmecs were the first great civilization in Mesoamerica, and the Mayas and Aztecs would follow them.

Like the Mayas and the Aztecs, the Olmecs had a government called a theocracy. This means the Olmecs thought their leaders were gods. These leaders were at the top of the social class system. Also at the top were the priests and other government workers. In the middle of the social class pyramid were the merchants and craftspeople. The lowest social class of the Olmecs was the farmers. Most Olmec people were farmers. The farmers grew crops like corn, beans, and squash.

Like modern civilizations, the Olmecs used roads. The roads connected different villages and made it easier for people to travel. This meant that Olmecs could use the road to travel and trade their goods. Because there were volcanoes in the area where the Olmecs lived, there were special rocks there called basalt and obsidian. Another highly prized stone was jade. The Olmecs traded for these stones.

The Olmecs were an advanced civilization that had many accomplishments. They developed a number system so they could do math. They also made a calendar and had a system of writing.

## The Maya

The Maya were a group of people that came after the Olmec. Like the Olmec, they were an advanced civilization that lived in Mesoamerica. Two famous cities of the Maya were Tikal and Chichen Itza. Both these places had observatories to view the stars, palaces for the rulers, baths for the people, and aqueducts to carry water. Like the Olmec, the Maya were interested in astronomy and had a calendar. They used the calendar to tell the days people were born and married, to tell of special holidays, and to tell of days they won battles. The Mayan calendar had 365 days, just like ours. The Maya also used the calendar to tell when to plant their crops. They farmed corn, beans, and squash. Like the Olmec, the Maya also had a writing system, but theirs was even more complicated. The Maya used hieroglyphics, like the Egyptians.

In Chichen Itza, there are two large cenotes. Cenotes are sinkholes. Sinkholes are giant, round holes in the ground that fill with water. Archaeologists believe these cenotes were sacred to the Maya because they were a place where people could get water. Archaeologists also believe the Maya tried to communicate to their gods through the cenotes. The Maya would throw baskets, cloth, benches, jewelry, and even people into the cenotes.

Like the Olmec, the Maya also had a government called a theocracy. The Mayan ruler was at the top of the Mayan social class system. There were many things about the Maya that were similar to the Olmec.

## The Maya

The Maya were a group of people that came after the Olmec. Like the Olmec, they were an advanced civilization that lived in Mesoamerica. Two famous cities of the Maya were Tikal and Chichen Itza. Both these places had observatories to view the stars, palaces for the rulers, baths for the people, and aqueducts to carry water. Like the Olmec, the Maya were interested in astronomy and had a calendar. They used the calendar to tell the days people were born and married, to tell of special holidays, and to tell of days they won battles. The Mayan calendar had 365 days, just like ours. The Maya also used the calendar to tell when to plant their crops. They farmed corn, beans, and squash. Like the Olmec, the Maya also had a writing system, but theirs was even more complicated. The Maya used hieroglyphics, like the Egyptians.

In Chichen Itza, there are two large cenotes. Cenotes are sinkholes. Sinkholes are giant, round holes in the ground that fill with water. Archaeologists believe these cenotes were sacred to the Maya because they were a place where people could get water. Archaeologists also believe the Maya tried to communicate to their gods through the cenotes. The Maya would throw baskets, cloth, benches, jewelry, and even people into the cenotes.

Like the Olmec, the Maya also had a government called a theocracy. The Mayan ruler was at the top of the Mayan social class system. There were many things about the Maya that were similar to the Olmec.

## The Aztecs

Like the Maya and the Olmecs, the Aztecs also farmed corn, beans, and squash. They were also great builders and scientists.

Aztec civilization began in the 1300's when a group of people called the Mexica settled on two swamp islands on Lake Texcoco. This settlement eventually turned into a city called Tenochtitlan. Eventually, this city got so big that the Mexica had to build islands for people to live on. These man-made islands were called chinampas. All of the islands were connected by bridges called causeways. Causeways are long, skinny pieces of land that connect the islands together. Once Tenochtitlan got very big, the Mexica people started calling themselves "Aztecs."

Like the Olmecs and the Maya, the Aztecs had a theocracy. They believed their leaders represented the gods. One ruler of the Aztecs was Moctezuma I. He was such a good ruler that he made the Aztec territory even bigger. When the Aztecs conquered more land, they made the people they conquered pay them taxes. The taxes helped the Aztecs get rich. It also helped that young, Aztec men were trained warriors. This made it easier for the Aztecs to win battles and conquer new lands.

The Olmecs, Maya, and Aztecs were all polytheistic. This means they worshipped many gods. The Aztecs believed certain gods controlled the weather. Since farming corn, beans, and squash was important to them, they prayed to the gods to help them grow a lot of food. One of these gods was called Quetzalcoatl. The Aztecs believed they had to do certain things to please the gods, or the gods wouldn't help them. One thing they believed in was human sacrifice. This is when one human kills another in honor of the gods. The Aztecs sacrificed a lot of prisoners, but they also sacrificed women, children, and slaves.

## The Aztecs

Like the Maya and the Olmecs, the Aztecs also farmed corn, beans, and squash. They were also great builders and scientists.

Aztec civilization began in the 1300's when a group of people called the Mexica settled on two swamp islands on Lake Texcoco. This settlement eventually turned into a city called Tenochtitlan. Eventually, this city got so big that the Mexica had to build islands for people to live on. These man-made islands were called chinampas. All of the islands were connected by bridges called causeways. Causeways are long, skinny pieces of land that connect the islands together. Once Tenochtitlan got very big, the Mexica people started calling themselves "Aztecs."

Like the Olmecs and the Maya, the Aztecs had a theocracy. They believed their leaders represented the gods. One ruler of the Aztecs was Moctezuma I. He was such a good ruler that he made the Aztec territory even bigger. When the Aztecs conquered more land, they made the people they conquered pay them taxes. The taxes helped the Aztecs get rich. It also helped that young, Aztec men were trained warriors. This made it easier for the Aztecs to win battles and conquer new lands.

The Olmecs, Maya, and Aztecs were all polytheistic. This means they worshipped many gods. The Aztecs believed certain gods controlled the weather. Since farming corn, beans, and squash was important to them, they prayed to the gods to help them grow a lot of food. One of these gods was called Quetzalcoatl. The Aztecs believed they had to do certain things to please the gods, or the gods wouldn't help them. One thing they believed in was human sacrifice. This is when one human kills another in honor of the gods. The Aztecs sacrificed a lot of prisoners, but they also sacrificed women, children, and slaves.

## The Inca

The Inca were a group of people that lived in South America. They were similar to the people in Mesoamerica in many ways, but they lived in a very different land.

The Inca lived in a mountain range called the Andes. Their empire was huge. One man, an emperor named Pachacuti built a strong army. His army conquered many new lands and made the Inca Empire even bigger. In honor of all his army's victories, Pachacuti build many great buildings. Eventually, Pachacuti's son became emperor, and he made the Inca Empire even bigger. It might have been very hard to rule such a large empire, but the Incas were smart. The Inca Empire was divided into provinces and each province was ruled by a governor.

Unlike the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec, the Inca did not have a system of writing. Instead, they used something called quipu to keep important records. Quipu were knots on a rope. The ropes were different lengths and colors. The lengths, colors, and knots stood for things like numbers, objects, and distances.

Like the Aztecs, the Inca also built roads. The roads were built for the government and the military. Regular citizens were not allowed to use them. Anyone who used the road illegally or damaged an Incan road was punished by death. Like the Aztecs and the Maya, the Inca were also polytheistic. This means they worshipped many gods. Their government was also a theocracy, meaning the people thought their leaders represented the gods.

## The Inca

The Inca were a group of people that lived in South America. They were similar to the people in Mesoamerica in many ways, but they lived in a very different land.

The Inca lived in a mountain range called the Andes. Their empire was huge. One man, an emperor named Pachacuti built a strong army. His army conquered many new lands and made the Inca Empire even bigger. In honor of all his army's victories, Pachacuti build many great buildings. Eventually, Pachacuti's son became emperor, and he made the Inca Empire even bigger. It might have been very hard to rule such a large empire, but the Incas were smart. The Inca Empire was divided into provinces and each province was ruled by a governor.

Unlike the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec, the Inca did not have a system of writing. Instead, they used something called quipu to keep important records. Quipu were knots on a rope. The ropes were different lengths and colors. The lengths, colors, and knots stood for things like numbers, objects, and distances.

Like the Aztecs, the Inca also built roads. The roads were built for the government and the military. Regular citizens were not allowed to use them. Anyone who used the road illegally or damaged an Incan road was punished by death. Like the Aztecs and the Maya, the Inca were also polytheistic. This means they worshipped many gods. Their government was also a theocracy, meaning the people thought their leaders represented the gods.

## The Geography of the Southwest

The Anasazi were a group of Native American people that lived in the Southwestern part of the United States. The Southwest is the area in the United States that now includes New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah. This area has a lot of desert. This means it gets very little rainfall and has very little vegetation. Vegetation means “plants.” Because there aren’t a lot of plants, there aren’t a lot of animals because they don’t have plants to eat. Temperatures in the Southwest can get very hot during the day and can get very cold at night.

The Southwest also has mountains and plateaus. A famous mountain range in the Southwest is the Rockies are a mountain range found in the Southwest.

Even though the Southwest is land that is arid and dry, the Anasazi still lived there and farmed there. This was not easy because there wasn’t a lot of water for the crops. Still, the Anasazi grew corn, beans, and squash, just like the Olmecs, Aztecs, and Maya. To grow these crops they had to use irrigation. Irrigation is when people transport water from one area to their crops. The Anasazi got their water from the Gila and Salt rivers. They built dams which held water in one place. They also built canals which directed water from one place to another.

Once the Anasazi were able to farm the land where they lived, they were able to settle into one place. After everyone settled in one place, villages began to form.

## The Geography of the Southwest

The Anasazi were a group of Native American people that lived in the Southwestern part of the United States. The Southwest is the area in the United States that now includes New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah. This area has a lot of desert. This means it gets very little rainfall and has very little vegetation. Vegetation means “plants.” Because there aren’t a lot of plants, there aren’t a lot of animals because they don’t have plants to eat. Temperatures in the Southwest can get very hot during the day and can get very cold at night.

The Southwest also has mountains and plateaus. A famous mountain range in the Southwest is the Rockies are a mountain range found in the Southwest.

Even though the Southwest is land that is arid and dry, the Anasazi still lived there and farmed there. This was not easy because there wasn’t a lot of water for the crops. Still, the Anasazi grew corn, beans, and squash, just like the Olmecs, Aztecs, and Maya. To grow these crops they had to use irrigation. Irrigation is when people transport water from one area to their crops. The Anasazi got their water from the Gila and Salt rivers. They built dams which held water in one place. They also built canals which directed water from one place to another.

Once the Anasazi were able to farm the land where they lived, they were able to settle into one place. After everyone settled in one place, villages began to form.

## The Anasazi

The Anasazi were a group of people that lived in the Southwest United States from about 100 CE to 1300 CE. The Anasazi are known for the kind of buildings they constructed, pueblos. The Anasazi are the ancestors of group of people called Pueblo people. The Pueblo people were named after their architecture, or buildings.

A pueblo is a building made out adobe. Adobe bricks are made from sun-dried mud. In the Southwest, there was plenty of soil and sun to be turned into adobe. Pueblos were often built into the sides of cliffs, or mountains. Building in the sides of mountains provided people with extra shelter from the harsh climate of the Southwest. Pueblos were often two or more stories tall, meaning they looked like apartment complexes. Many people lived in pueblos. The biggest pueblo was found in Chaco Canyon. It had more than 800 rooms and more than 1000 people lived there.

The Anasazi were excellent farmers and craftsmen. You already know that they were able to farm corn, squash, and beans, in spite of the lack of water and high and low temperatures in the Southwest. As craftsmen they made pottery and baskets, many of which helped them store food. Anasazi craftsmen also made beautiful jewelry out of turquoise, a blue stone.

Sadly, many of the Anasazi had to leave their homes because of a drought. A drought is when there is a shortage of rain. When there is no rain it is hard for crops to survive. During this drought, many people died and many others moved to a new place.

## The Anasazi

The Anasazi were a group of people that lived in the Southwest United States from about 100 CE to 1300 CE. The Anasazi are known for the kind of buildings they constructed, pueblos. The Anasazi are the ancestors of group of people called Pueblo people. The Pueblo people were named after their architecture, or buildings.

A pueblo is a building made out adobe. Adobe bricks are made from sun-dried mud. In the Southwest, there was plenty of soil and sun to be turned into adobe. Pueblos were often built into the sides of cliffs, or mountains. Building in the sides of mountains provided people with extra shelter from the harsh climate of the Southwest. Pueblos were often two or more stories tall, meaning they looked like apartment complexes. Many people lived in pueblos. The biggest pueblo was found in Chaco Canyon. It had more than 800 rooms and more than 1000 people lived there.

The Anasazi were excellent farmers and craftsmen. You already know that they were able to farm corn, squash, and beans, in spite of the lack of water and high and low temperatures in the Southwest. As craftsmen they made pottery and baskets, many of which helped them store food. Anasazi craftsmen also made beautiful jewelry out of turquoise, a blue stone.

Sadly, many of the Anasazi had to leave their homes because of a drought. A drought is when there is a shortage of rain. When there is no rain it is hard for crops to survive. During this drought, many people died and many others moved to a new place.