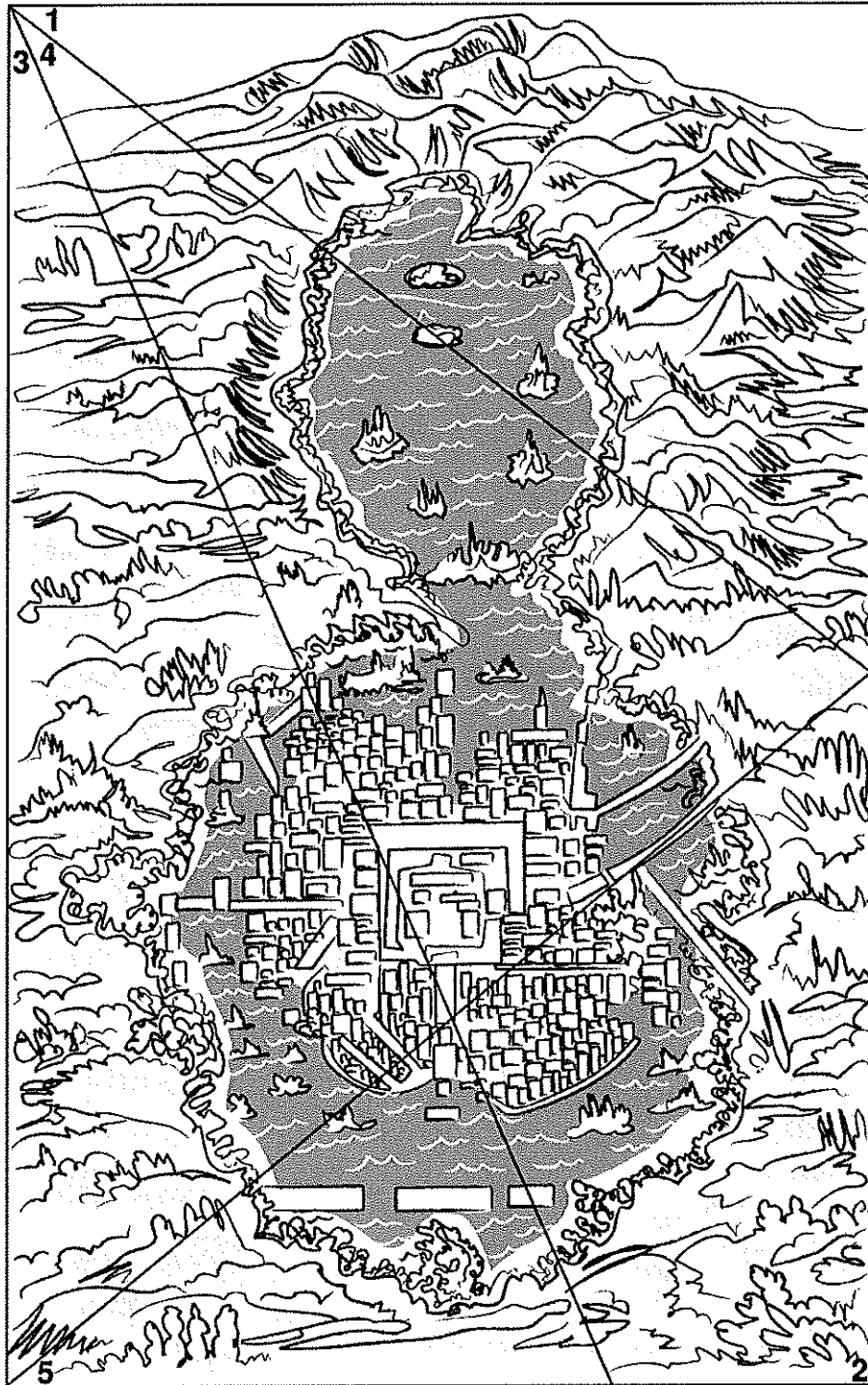


Aztec Puzzle: Tenochtitlan



Aztec: Floating Gardens

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read the text below, then follow the directions. When you are finished, show your teacher your poster to earn a puzzle piece.

The Aztecs built their great city of Tenochtitlan in the middle of a swamp. The city was surrounded on all sides by water, which made it easy to defend, but it was not so easy to farm in the swamp. To get more usable farmland, the Aztecs created floating farms called chinampas.

First, they wove together the trunks of many trees, which floated on the water. Then, they covered this floating mat with soil, which they dredged from the bottom of the swamp in order to create canals where ships could pass. This soil was rich in nutrients, and the Aztecs were frequently able to grow a surplus of corn, squash, and beans. Chinampas were kept from drifting away by driving huge stakes into the muck or by planting trees in the swamp that grew up through the chinampa and held it in place. Eventually, a chinampa could become a small island.

At its height, 300,000 people lived in Tenochtitlan, and crops grown on chinampas made up one-half to two-thirds of the food eaten by the people of the city.

Directions: Work in a group of two or three students to make a poster describing an Aztec chinampa. Your poster needs to be colorful and needs to include a written description of each part of your chinampa and how it was used in Aztec times.

Aztec: Founding Myth

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Answer the questions below. When you are finished, show your answers to your teacher to earn a puzzle piece.

Question 1: Work by yourself and use research materials to search the flags of the world. On which flag is there a picture of an eagle with a snake in its mouth, sitting on a cactus (as shown below)? Clue: This flag is red, green, and white.

Legend says that the Aztec people were forced from their homes and wandered for hundreds of years looking for a new place to settle. The god Huitzilopochtli told the Aztec people that when they saw an eagle sitting on a cactus with a snake in its mouth, they would know they had found the right place to build a great city. Many times, the Aztecs came across a promising location, but they failed to find the sign and they kept searching. Finally in A.D.



1325, they found themselves on the shores of Lake Texcoco. The lake was swampy and mosquito-infested, and the Aztecs were about to move on when one warrior with keen eyes stood and pointed toward the center of the lake. There on a rocky island, grew a prickly-pear cactus and on this cactus sat an eagle with a live snake in its mouth. The Aztecs had found the sign! Though it seemed strange to build a city in the middle of a swamp, they didn't question the wisdom of Huitzilopochtli. The Aztecs named their great city Tenochtitlan, which means "place where cactus grows from stone."

Question 2: A modern city was built on the ruins of Tenochtitlan. This city is the capital of the country you listed in the first question. Use research materials to discover the name of this city.

Question 3: Do you think the Aztecs were right to follow the advice of Huitzilopochtli? Why or why not? Write on the back of this page if you need more space for your answer.

Aztec: Codex

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Complete this task before working on *Aztec: Writing*. When you are finished, show your codex to your teacher to earn a puzzle piece.

Unlike the Mayas, the Aztecs used a system of writing to keep track of the workings of the empire. A ruler named Xtiuxochiti described the things that Aztec scribes would have written:

“They had scribes for each branch of knowledge. Some dealt with the annals, putting down in order the things that happened each year, giving the day, month, and hour. Others had charge of the genealogies, recording the lineage of rulers, lords and noblemen, registering the newborn and deleting those who had died.”

At the height of Aztec civilization, the city of Tenochtitlan used more than 480,000 sheets of paper per year, which were made into a type of scroll called a codex. Of these many, many codices that were made, only a few still exist. The Spanish conquistadors destroyed most, and the ones that the Aztecs hid rotted due to the area’s humid climate.

Each codex was made from a long strip of paper, which was about six to seven inches wide and sometimes up to 13 yards (11.8 m) long. This long piece of paper was folded like an accordion or zigzag and once it was all folded, the Aztecs used a wood cover for both the front and the back.

Directions: Work with a partner and use cardboard, paper, tape, and glue to create an Aztec codex as described below.

1. Cut three sheets of regular letter-sized paper in half across the middle.
2. Using as little tape as possible, tape them back together to form a long sheet that is 5.5 inches (14 cm) wide.
3. Fold this long sheet in a zigzag pattern along the lines you taped.
4. Cut out cardboard to use as a front cover and a back cover.
5. Use glue to attach your covers.
6. Decorate the covers of your codex.



Aztec: Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____

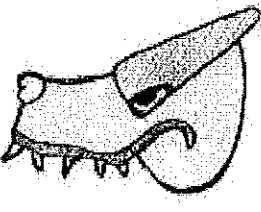
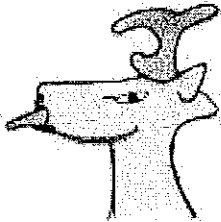
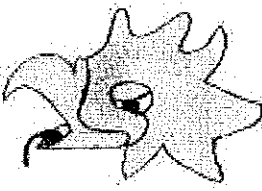

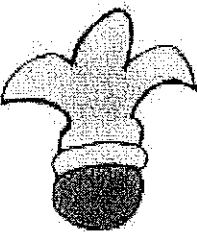

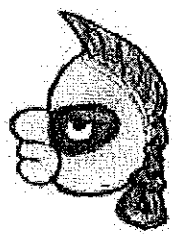

Directions: Complete the *Aztec: Codex* sheet before starting this one. When you finish this sheet, show it to your teacher to earn a puzzle piece.

Aztec writing looked similar to Egyptian hieroglyphics, but it could sometimes be interpreted in different ways. For example, if you drew an eye, it could be a pictogram (meaning an eye as part of the body), it could be an ideogram (meaning the idea of sight), or it could be phonetic (meaning the sound "I"). This could make reading Aztec writing a bit difficult, and the people went to many years of school before they were able to read.

Writing was a two-person job for the Aztecs. First, a scribe would write the black outlines of all the symbols, and then a painter would fill in the symbols with red, blue, green, and yellow paints.

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, work with a partner to make up your own symbols for at least 20 things, ideas, actions, or places. Use the examples in the box below to help you. Draw your symbols on the pages of the codex you made earlier. Also, write an Aztec name for each symbol and the symbol's English translation. Don't forget to color your symbols using red, blue, green, and yellow. After you have created your 20 symbols, use them to write a sentence. Be creative!

Remember: The Aztecs wrote in columns instead of in lines. They read from the top down.

			
crocodile	deer	eagle	flint
			
flower	lizard	monkey	reed