**The Maya, Aztec, and Inca Civilizations**

**The Maya: People of Mystery**

I. To identify the Maya as a one of the earliest civilizations in the Americas.  To recognize how ancient ruins have allowed archaeologists to understand Mayan civilization, religion, and society.

A. The Vanishing Civilization

* + The Mayans were located in Mexico and Central America.
  + They discovered essential mathematic concepts such as developing a calendar based on the stars that is still quite accurate.
  + The Mayans disappeared mysteriously.

B. Discovery in the Jungle

* + The ruins of Copan were located in Honduras in 1839.
  + Controlled city-states in the Yucatan Peninsula and in modern day Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize.
  + Had a mighty reign from A.D. 200 to 900.
  + The largest structures were temples and pyramids used for religious purposes.

C. Mysterious Writing

* + In Copan, you can find the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Stairway which contains numerous hieroglyphs. It was discovered in 1839.
  + There are 63 stairs with glyphs that name all of the rules of Copan and their victories.

D. Breath on a Mirror

* + The daily life of the Mayans included family, farming, and serving the Gods.
  + A Mayan legend says that the first people created could see all, but the creator thought this gave them too much power.  So they took the power away and gave only human sight and power.  The *Popol Vuh* describes how the Gods wanted to cloud the humans view of the world “like breath on a mirror.”

E. Serious Play

* + Pok-ta-pok was a game played on various sized courts.  The goal was to drive a solid rubber ball through a ring that was only slightly larger than the ball. However, no hands of feet were allowed to help.
  + There is a court in Chichen Itza that is still visible today.
  + The game is thought to be a battle between good and evil.  The winners are good and were rewarded clothing and jewelry.  The losers were considered evil and some were made as a sacrifice to the Gods.
  + Sacrifice was a way to please the Gods.

**Maya Science and Daily Life**

I. To identify the main achievements of the Maya, explain their religious beliefs and how they led to scientific achievements, and to learn about specific discoveries related to the Maya.

A. Wisdom in the Sky

* + Despite the clouded view given to the Mayas like “breath on a mirror,” they still made very precise observations and were very knowledgeable in some fields of study such as astronomy.

B. Maya Calendars

* + Without technology the Maya determined there were 365.2420 days in a year.  Only two ten thousandths off from the actual modern calculation.
  + They used a solar calendar with 18 months or the Sacred Round, which was 260 days long and kept track of religious holidays.

C. Astronomy at Work

* + Mayans constructed their temples and pyramids in order to get the sun’s rays to hit on its most important parts. Very advanced astronomy.

D. Inventing Zero

* + Dot stood for one, bar was five, and shell was zero.
  + Maya used the zero as a placeholder and were one of the first people to use this concept.

E. How They Lived

* + Mayans men were farmers, mainly corn.  They ate a lot of tortillas. The women and girls took care of the house, cleaned, cooked, made clothing, etc.
  + Mayan babies were thought to be pretty with slightly crossed eyes and a flat head.  So parents would hang a bead from the nose of the child and put a board on the back of the head.

F. Coming of Age

* + From Age 5-14 children were marked to show they were in the stage of childhood.
  + At age 14, a ceremony was held to cut away the marks of childhood to show their entry into adulthood.  The boys would move into a home of unmarried men until their marriage had been arranged.
  + The marriage ceremony was arranged on a day that would please the gods, however, the good and bad gods cause both positive and negative results in a marriage and everyday life.

G. Where Did Everybody Go?

* + It is believed that the Mayans left in the 900s, because this is when their hieroglyphs of their history began to disappear.
  + Some believe that the farmers rose against the nobles and priests.  Others have suggested that disease terminated the population.  Or perhaps there was a natural disaster such as flood or drought.
  + However, there are still descendants of the scattered Maya that continue some of their rich heritage.

**The Aztecs: Soldiers of Blood**

I. To recognize the importance of religion and warfare to Aztec life.  To explain how the Aztecs were able to build and control such a powerful empire through numerous wars.  To describe Aztec religious beliefs and explain how they were linked to the traditions of society.

A. The Eagle and the Cactus

* + The Aztec civ began about 300 years after the Mayans in central Mexico.
  + The nomadic Aztecs moved around Mexico until a god of the sun told them to search for an eagle with a snake in its beak, perched on a cactus.
  + They found it on Lake Texcoco and here is where they build the legendary city of Tenochtitlan (“place of the cactus”).

B. Conquering City-States

* + Tenochtitlan was created in 1325.  They were very powerful and began to conquer the smaller, surrounding city-states and bring them into their city.  About 500 at its heigth.
  + 150,000-200,000 people lived in the main city and the emperor ruled over 5 million.
  + The Aztecs became wealthy as they forced the conquered city-states to send whatever gold, silver, or valuables it had to Tenochtitlan.

C. The Legend of the Five Suns

* + Sacrifices were the most important religious ceremony to the Aztecs and they required a lot of captors to sacrifice.
  + Aztec religion followed stories of destruction.  They believed the universe had been destroyed four times already.  The Aztecs lived under the fifth sun.
  + In order to keep their god happy and provide him with strength, they had to make numerous sacrifices on the altars.  They preferred to use captured soldiers with strong hearts.

D. Religious Sacrifice

* + The ceremony of sacrifice was quite gruesome and performed by several priests.  The heart was cut out and the rest of the body was left to topple down the pyramid.
  + After the pyramid was soaked in blood, the heads were displayed in the plaza.
  + The Aztecs truly believed this was how to please the gods and bring good fortune.

E. Love of War

* + Aztecs were born into a specific class, however, soldiers could advance.  The greatest honor was death in battle.

**Tenochtitlan: City of Wonder**

I. To describe Tenochtitlan and its landscape.  To identify Montezuma II and describe how he reigned.

A. Floating Paradise

* + Tenochtitlan is a city built on an island in the middle of a lake.
  + Three causeways connected the city to the mainland along with numerous canals.

B. City Tour

* + Parts of Lake Texcoco were turned into flower beds on the outer edge of the city.
  + They piled up the soil in shallow areas and it was great for farms.

C. Aztec Home Life

* + They lived in one-room houses with thatched roofs and mud walls.

D. Suburbs and Schools

* + The boys learned military skills and how to lead moral lives in school.  Many of the teachers were priests who were very strict and scary to look at.
  + In school, students learn religion, astronomy, reading, writing, and how to create a codex.

E. The Market

* + Many trades are made in the open air market.
  + There is quite a variety of handmade goods and food to be traded.  Also, a slave trade can be found in one section of the market.

F. The Ceremonial Center

* + The Great Temple is in the center.  You can find the emperor’s palace close by.

G. Montezuma II

* + Emperor in the early 1500s.  You never looked the emperor in the eyes.  His people would throw themselves down to the ground in his presence.
  + During travel his servants would carry a litter or place mats on the ground along the way so he wouldn’t get his feet dirty.
  + Many horrific events occured during his reign.  They thought the world might end soon.  However, they didn’t know it was the Spaniards traveling across the Atlantic that would bring about their end.

**The Incas: Lords of the Mountains**

I. To identify the Incas and describe how they lived.  Describe the rule of the Sapa Inca. To explain how the Incas organized their empire and met the needs of their people.

A. Here Comes the Sun

* + The ruler of the Incan civilization was known as the Sapa Inca, living son of Inti, the sun god.
  + No one could look right at him.

B. The Empire of the Sun

* + Located on the western coast of South America.  In modern day Peru.
  + By the 1530, the Incas were the largest civilization in the Americas.
  + There were 12 million people stretched over 2,000 miles.
  + Their lands were very diverse.  Near the coast there were dry deserts, while in snow fell in the Andes mountains.  There were also the jungles of the Amazon.

C. Inca Life

* + All families were a member of a clan that farmed a specific piece of land.
  + Most made their life by farming.  The potato was their largest crop.  The alpaca and llama brought money for livestock.
  + Llamas were important because they were very strong and could carry a lot.  However, they are very stubborn animals.  Their wool was used for clothes.  When they died they were made into jerky charqui.

D. For the Good of the Empire

* + Part of the workers time was spent for the Sapa Inca and the empire.  While raising crops some went to the farmer and some went to the empire.
  + The Inca people believed they were providing for the good of the people.  Supplies were stored in warehouses for the elderly or in times of great need.
  + He-Who-Sees-Everything traveled to the Inca villages to collect taxes, serve as a matchmaker,  and to collect information for the census.
  + He-Who-Sees-Everything interviewed all the unmarried girls.  He sent the good ones to be a wife to the Sapa Inca and the rest were given to an unmarried man.

**Inca Engineering**

I. To explain how Inca engineers overcame challenges presented by the geography of the land.  To describe how the Incas kept their empire together without a written language and to continue building an understanding of how the Sapa Inca united the empire.

A. The Royal Road

* + The Royal Road was 2,000 miles long and was made to quickly send the army to outlying territories and for trade.  It wasn’t until the 1800s that a longer road was built.
  + It was 24 ft wide and passed through a variety of lands.  Storehouses were placed along the road for travelers to stop and get food.
  + Some parts of the road were dirt, while other were jigsawed stones.

B. Bridges Built for Centuries

* + In 1350, the Incas built a bridge over a steep river gorge called Apurimac.
  + It was a hanging suspension bridge that the rope had to be replaced every two years.  It was in service for 500 years.

C. Mountain Staircases

* + In order to grow crops on the steep mountainside, the Incas used terraces.  They were flat farm fields that were cut into the side of the mountain.  Irrigation systems were put in to bring in water.

D. Keeping it all Together

* + There was no written language.  However, they used a quipu for counting and record-keeping.
  + Fast running messengers were used to send news back and forth in a village.  The messenger memorized the message, ran tot he rest station, transferred the message to the next person.
  + A message could travel 150 miles in one day.

E. City in the Clouds

* + Machu Picchu is in the mountains of Cusco located between two peaks of the Andes Mountains.
  + It was once a travel location for the Inca emperors.  It is very difficult to get to.

F. Expanding the Empire

* + The Incas grew by conquering others.  However, they did not sacrifice their enemies but rather tried to get them to become citizens.
  + When they overtook a region that wasn’t resistant, the Sapa Inca changed few things and allowed them to worship their own gods.
  + Those that were resistant were sent to well populated cities so they were surrounded by the Inca culture.

**The End of Two Empires**

I.  To describe how the Aztecs and Incas reacted to Spanish arrival, to identify Cortes and Pizarro as important Spaniards that led invasions against these natives, and to recognize why the Spanish were able to conquer these two great empires.

A.  The Question

* + A poet wondered how the Aztecs would be conquered.

B.  The Answer

* + A messenger saw a “floating mountain” on the ocean and reported it to the emperor.
  + When the Spanish ship arrived, Montezuma thought the Spaniards were Gods and he welcomed them with gold and riches.

C.  Hernan Cortes

* + As Hernan traveled towards Tenochtitlan he gathered followers from surrounding lands.  These people were tired of being taken as sacrifices and wanted to join these Gods.

D.  Cortes the Conqueror

* + Cortes asked Montezuma to stop making sacrifices to the Gods and change their religion.  Montezuma refused.
  + The Spaniards were very outnumbered, but they were able to gather enough followers from surrounding areas and conquered the Aztecs in 1521.

E.  The End of the Incas

* + When the Sapa Inca died of a disease, his two sons fought over the title of Sapa Inca and this caused a great Civil War among the Incas.
  + Atahualpa won, but a messenger once again brought strange tellings of a “A house” on the ocean.

F.  Francisco Pizarro

* + The conquistadors, led by Pizarro, arrived in the Inca Civ and found great riches immediately.  They marched to Cuzco and arranged a meeting with Atahualpa, who did not fear these bearded men.
  + However, a trap was sprung upon the unarmed Incas.  All they needed was for the Incas to refuse their offer of Christianity, which of course Atahualpa did not.

G.  A Deadly Bargain

* + After being captured, Atahualpa offered a ransom of gold to fill up an entire room.  He ordered his people to gather these goods and bring them to Cuzco.
  + However, Pizarro broke his promise and killed Atahualpa.  With the empire weakened by civil war and disease, and their ruler destroyed, it was easy for the Spaniards to conquer the Incas.

Notes taken from:

-- Hirsch, E. D.  *Pearson Learning Core Knowledge: History & Geography*. Parsippany, NJ: Pearson Learning Group, 2002. Print.