

## The Aztec Empire



The Aztecs' magnificent capital, Tenochtitlán, was built on an island in Lake Texcoco.



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLS INTERPRETING MAPS

1. **Place** What bodies of water bordered the Aztec Empire?
2. **Location** Which cities were located on Lake Texcoco?

- **Bell Work**
- Examine the map on page 475.
- What is the name of the lake found in the Aztec Empire?
- What geological challenges did the first Aztec face?
- How did they overcome these this challenge?

# Maya Quiz



# The Aztecs

**7.66** I can create a graphic organizer or concept map explaining how and where each empire arose (how the Aztec and Incan empires were eventually defeated by the Spanish in the 16th century).

## Main Idea 2:

# Life in the empire was shaped by social structure, religion, and warfare.

- The Aztecs had a complex social structure, a demanding religion, and a rich culture.
- The Aztecs worshipped many gods and regularly made human sacrifices to please the gods.
  - Sacrifices were often battle captives. Aztec warriors waged frequent battles with neighboring people to supply enough victims.
- Aztecs valued art and architecture.



# Classes of Aztec Society: Kings and Nobles

- The king (Emperor) was the most powerful person in Aztec society.
- The king was in charge of law, trade and tribute, and warfare.
- The king had nobles to help him manage the kingdom.
- The nobles were tax collectors and judges and performed other jobs as well. They passed their titles down from father to son.



# Classes of Aztec Society: Priest and Warriors

## Priests

- Kept calendars and decided when to plant crops or perform ceremonies.
- Passed down Aztec history and stories to keep their tradition alive
- Performed various religious ceremonies, including human sacrifice.

## Aztec warriors also had many duties

- fought fiercely to capture victims for religious sacrifices.
- had many privileges and were highly respected.
- respected for the wealth they brought to the empire.
- fought to conquer new lands and people, bringing more tribute and trade goods to enrich the Aztec civilization.

[https://  
www.youtube.com/  
watch?  
v=9VM5AFgJ8LU#t=131](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VM5AFgJ8LU#t=131)

# Classes of Aztec Society: Merchants and Artisans

- Merchants gathered goods from all over the empire and sold them in the main market.
- Many merchants were very wealthy and used their money to build large houses and send their sons to private schools.
- Artisans were also rich and were important to the Aztecs. They made gold jewelry and elaborate headdresses.

# Classes of Aztec Society:

## Farmers and Slaves

- Farmers and slaves made up the lowest class of Aztec society.
- Most of the people who lived in the empire were farmers who grew maize, beans, and a few other crops.
- Farmers were very poor and did not own their own land.
- Slaves were people who had been captured in battle or who could not pay their debts. They were laborers, and if they did not obey, they were sacrificed to the gods.



**Kings**

Aztec kings ruled the empire and lived in luxury.

**Nobles**

Nobles served as important officials, such as tax collectors and judges.

**Priests**

Priests performed many important duties, such as keeping calendars.

**Warriors**

Warriors fought to conquer other peoples and capture victims for sacrifice.

**Merchants**

Aztec merchants traded goods like food, clothing, and tools.

**Artisans**

Skilled artisans made a wide variety of goods that people needed.

**Farmers**

Most Aztecs were farmers who lived in simple huts.

**Slaves**

Prisoners of war became slaves. They were forced to work or were sacrificed.

# Main Idea 3:

## Hernán Cortés conquered the Aztec Empire in 1521.

- In the late 1400s Spanish explorers and soldiers arrived in the Americas.
- The Spanish conquerors, or conquistadors, came to explore new lands, search for gold, and spread the Catholic religion.

# Defeat of Aztec Video



# Cortés and Moctezuma

- A small group of conquistadors led by Cortés reached Mexico in 1519.
- Moctezuma II, the leader of the Aztec, believed that Cortés was a god.
- Moctezuma sent Cortés gifts, including gold. Cortés wanted more gold, so he went to Moctezuma.
- Cortés took Moctezuma prisoner. The other Aztecs attacked Cortés and his men. The Spanish were driven out, but Moctezuma was killed.
- Cortés returned with many Indian allies, and in 1521 they defeated the Aztecs and ended their empire.

# Causes of the Defeat of the Aztecs

- How did a few conquistadors defeat a powerful empire?
  - Four factors were vital in the Spanish victory: alliances, weapons and horses, geography, and disease.
- **Alliances** The Spanish had help from other Indians in the region who resented the Aztecs' harsh rule.
- **Weapons & Horses** The Spanish had better weapons than the Aztecs. They had cannons, armor, swords, and horses that the Aztecs did not have.
- **Geography** The Spanish blocked Tenochtitlán's causeways, bridges, and waterways. This cut off drinking water and other supplies. Thousands of Aztecs died from starvation.
- **Disease** The Spanish had unknowingly brought deadly diseases such as smallpox to the Americas. These diseases killed the Aztecs, who had never been exposed to such diseases.

# Exit Ticket

- Section assessment p. 478 questions 2 -3