

VIDEOS

<http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/pyramids-in-latin-america>

The Mayan Encounter

1. *What surprised the Spaniards when they reached the Mayans?*
2. *Whose calendars were more accurate? The Mayans' or the Europeans'?*
3. *How does Guerrero help the Mayans and what is ironic about it?*

The Tomb of King Pacal (Scroll down and it's on the right side)

4. *What is the name of the temple, which is the most complex temple the Mayans have ever tried to build?*
5. *How would the Mayans communicate within the tomb?*
6. *What was Pacal's coffin rich in?*
7. *The tomb serves as the _____ of Pacal.*

PYRAMIDS IN LATIN AMERICA

Despite the towering reputation of Egypt's Great Pyramids at Giza, the Americas actually contain more pyramid structures than the rest of the planet combined. Civilizations like the Olmec, Maya, Aztec and Inca all built pyramids to house their deities, as well as to bury their kings. In many of their great city-states, temple-pyramids formed the center of public life and were the site of much holy ritual, including human sacrifice. The best known Latin American pyramids include the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon at Teotihuacán in central Mexico, the Castillo at Chichén Itzá in the Yucatan, the Great Pyramid in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, the Pyramid at Cholula and the Inca's great temple at Cuzco in Peru.

8. *Did you know that the Americas actually have more pyramids than Egypt? Yes or No*
9. *Define deity: (learnersdictionary.com)*

10. *What 2 items were housed in the Olmec, Maya, Aztec, and Inca pyramids?*
11. *How are the pyramids in the Americas similar to the forum in Rome?*
12. *Where were the human sacrifices held?*

RISE OF THE PYRAMID-BUILDERS

Mesoamerican peoples built pyramids from around 1000 B.C. up until the time of the Spanish conquest in the early 16th century. The earliest known pyramid stands at La Venta in Tabasco, Mexico. Built by the Olmecs, the first major Mesoamerican civilization, it dates to between 1000 B.C. and 400 B.C. American pyramids were generally built of earth and then faced with stone, typically in a stepped, or layered, shape topped by a platform or temple structure.

13. *(Math) How many years did the Mesoamericans build pyramids?
(Helpful tip: The birth of Christ is 1 BC)*
14. *Describe the typical characteristics of the Mesoamerican pyramids.*

DID YOU KNOW?

In many cases, pyramids in Latin America were rebuilt again and again over already existing structures, in order to glorify the current ruler. Rebuilding the pyramid, it was believed, was a crucial process that renewed the king's relationship with the gods.

At one point, historians concluded that (in contrast with Egyptian pyramids), pre-Columbian pyramids were not intended as burial chambers but as homes for deities. However, more recent excavations have unearthed evidence that some pyramids did include tombs, and there is also evidence that city-states used the pyramids for military defense.

15. *Where would you find the oldest pyramid, on the outside or on the inner core of the pyramids?*
16. *Why were the pyramids rebuilt?*

17. *What were the 3 uses of the pyramids?*

PYRAMID OF THE SUN

The most famous single pyramid in Latin America is the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán, Mexico. The Teotihuacán was one of the most dominant societies in Mesoamerica; their namesake capital, located northeast of today's Mexico City, had a population of 100,000 to 200,000 during the fifth and sixth centuries. According to Aztec tradition, the sun and the moon, as well as the rest of the universe, traced their origins to Teotihuacán. More temples have been discovered there than in any other Mesoamerican city.

18. *Write fifth century in the numerical form.*

The Teotihuacán built the Pyramids of the Sun and of the Moon between A.D. 1 and 250. Like many Mesoamerican pyramids, each was constructed around a core of rubble held in place by retaining walls. The walls were then faced with adobe bricks, and then covered with limestone. The base of the Pyramid of the Sun measures 730 feet per side, with five stepped terraces reaching a height of some 200 feet. Its massive size rivals that of the Great Pyramid of Khufu at Giza. Within the current pyramid is another, earlier pyramid structure of almost the same size. In 1971, archaeologists discovered a cave underneath the Pyramid of the Sun, leading to a chamber in the shape of a four-leaf clover. Artifacts found in the cave indicated the room's use as a shrine, long before the pyramid itself was built.

19. *Define adobe (learnersdictionary.com)*

20. *What did the artifacts found in the cave indicate about the pyramid?*

The Pyramid of the Moon, though similar, was built on a smaller scale; it sits at the north end of the city's main axis, called the Avenue of the Dead. Teotihuacán also contains a smaller stepped, stone-covered temple-pyramid called the Temple of the Feathered Serpent (an early form of the Aztec god

Quetzalcoatl). It was dedicated around A.D. 200, and evidence has been found of some 200 individuals who were sacrificed in the ceremony to honor it. Teotihuacán declined between the seventh and 10th centuries and was eventually abandoned.

21. *How many were sacrificed to honor the Pyramid of the Moon?*
22. *If the Aztecs were still around today, do you think they would still offer humans to their gods (Yes or No) and why?*

MAYA PYRAMIDS

The Maya, another dominant civilization of Mesoamerica, made temple-pyramids the glorious centers of their great stone cities. One of the most famous, the magnificently carved Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque (Mexico), was a funerary monument to the seventh century king Hanab Pakal. The tallest Maya pyramid, located in Tikal, Guatemala, dates to the eighth century A.D., before the civilization's mysterious decline. Another Maya monument, built in the ninth and 10th centuries A.D., is at the center of the city of Uxmal in the Yucatan. Known as the Pyramid of the Magician or Sorcerer, it was (according to Maya legend) built by the god of magic, Itzamná, as a training center for shamans, healers and priests.

The Maya city of Chichén Itzá contains the Castillo, or Temple of Kukulcan ("feathered serpent," the Maya equivalent of Quetzalcoatl). Constructed around A.D. 1100, the 180-square-foot Castillo was constructed over another temple-pyramid built 100 years earlier. Its four stairways have 91 steps each, which combined with the single step at the entrance to the temple adds up to 365 steps exactly—the number of days in the Mayan year. (The Maya had a complex astronomical and cosmological system, and often angled their ceremonial buildings, like pyramids, so that they would face sunrise or sunset at particular times of the year.)

23. *What was the shaman?*
24. *The Mayans had a God of Magic who taught the shaman, so how did the Mayans view someone overcoming an illness?*

25. *How many steps did the Temple of Kukulcan have and what does this number represent?*
26. *What other civilization have we discussed this year that built their pyramids based on astronomical system?*

AZTEC PYRAMIDS

The Aztecs, who lived in the Mexican valley between the 12th and 16th centuries, also built pyramids in order to house and honor their deities. The elaborate nature of Aztec pyramids and other architecture was also connected to the Aztec's warrior culture: The Aztec symbol for conquest was a burning pyramid, with a conqueror destroying the temple at its top. Tenochtitlan, the great Aztec capital, housed the Great Pyramid, a four-stepped structure some 60 meters high. At its top, two shrines honored Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec god of sun and war, and Tlaloc, god of rain and fertility. The Great Pyramid was destroyed along with the rest of the Aztec civilization by the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes and his army in 1521. Underneath its ruins, the remains of six earlier pyramids were later found, evidence of the constant rebuilding process common to the Mesoamerican pyramids.

27. *What was the Aztec symbol for conquest and why do you think they chose such a symbol?*
28. *Why would there be a god of fertility?*

Located in the plains surrounding the city of Puebla (founded by the Spanish colonists), the pyramid complex of Cholula (named for the Mesoamerican people that built it) was the largest single structure in pre-Columbian Mexico. Constructed from adobe in four stages of construction beginning around the second century B.C., the Pyramid of Cholula measured 1,083 by 1,034 feet at the base and was about 82 feet high. The warrior Toltecs conquered the region around 1200, and rebuilt the pyramid as their ceremonial center. The Aztecs later claimed it as their own, dedicating it to

the god Quetzalcoatl. When the Spaniards destroyed the holy city of Cholula in the 16th century, they built a church atop the ruins of the huge pyramid complex, in a conscious attempt to claim the New World for Christianity.

29. What point were the Spaniards trying to make by building a church atop of the Pyramid of Cholula?

PYRAMIDS TO THE SOUTH: MOCHE & INCA

More pyramids can be found in South America, which was home to indigenous populations like the Moche, Chimú and Incas. The Moche, who lived along the northern coast of what is now Peru, built their pyramids of adobe, or sun-dried mud-bricks. The Huaca del Sol (or Holy Place of the Sun) was almost 100 feet tall and built of more than 143 million bricks, while the Huaca de la Luna (dedicated to the moon) was rebuilt multiple times over a 600-year period.

30. Define indigenous (learnersdictionary.com)

Some 80 years before the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro arrived in the Andes, the Inca ruler Pachacuti Yupanqui (A.D. 1438 to 1471) began the construction of a great temple-pyramid, Sacsahuamán, in the capital city of Cuzco. It took 20,000 workers 50 years to build the pyramid, constructed from huge stones fitted together without mortar. The Incas, Latin America's last great indigenous civilization to survive, used the same building techniques to construct their marvelous stone city, Machu Picchu, high in the Andes.

31. Based on height, which pyramid is the largest pyramid of them all?