

CIVILIZATIONS OF THE AMERICAS DBQ

This task is based on the accompanying documents. Some of these documents have been edited for the purpose of this task. It is designed to test your ability to work with historic documents. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and the author's **point of view**.

Historical Context

Between 300 and 1500, three advanced civilizations developed in Central and South America. Ruins from the Mayan civilization remain even today in southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. The Aztecs, who conquered most of Mexico, built a highly-developed civilization in the 1400's. At the same time, the Incas were building an empire in Peru.

Instructions

The following question is based on the accompanying documents. As you analyze the documents, consider both the source of the document and the author's point of view. Be sure to:

1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about the topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to make notes. Answer the questions which follow each document.
3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the question. ***Were the Mayan, Aztec, and Incan advanced civilizations? What were their major accomplishments?***
4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and from your own knowledge outside the documents.

Document 1

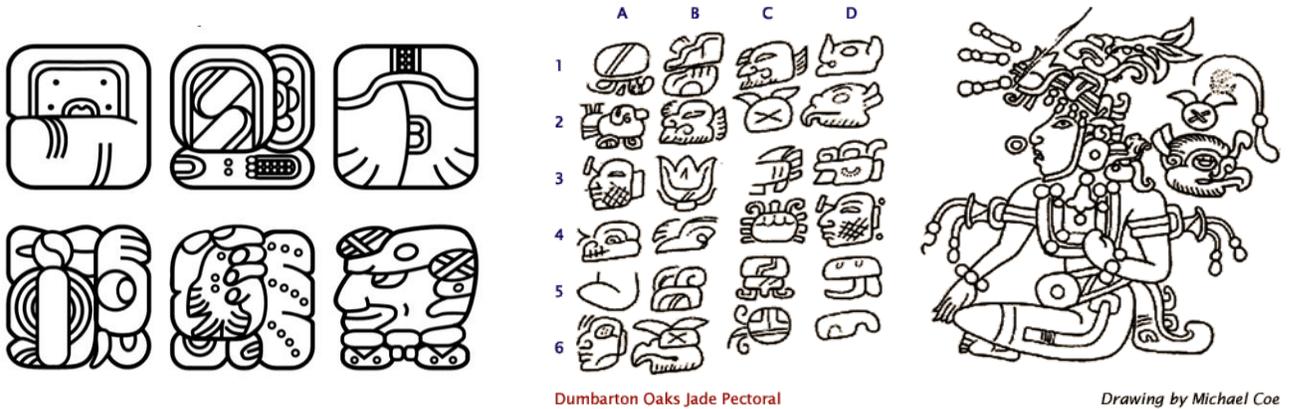
This pyramid in Tikal was the tallest structure in the Americas until the twentieth century.



1. Describe the significance of Mayan architecture evidenced in this temple at Tikal.

Document 2

This are glyphs from the Mayan calendar



2. What is the importance and significance of these glyphs (symbols)?

Document 3

When he arrived in 1519, the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés described the magnificent Aztec of Tenochtitlán with these words:

“The city has many squares where markets are held and trading is carried on. There is one square...where there are daily more than 60,000 souls, buying and selling, and where are found all the kinds of merchandise produced in these countries, including food products, jewels of gold and silver, lead, brass, copper, zinc, bones, shells, and feathers.”

3. Why was Cortés impressed when he arrived in Tenochtitlán in 1519?

Document 4

This description of farming in the Incan empire in 1539 was provided by Garcilazo de la Vega, a son of an Incan princess and a Spanish explorer.

“As soon as the Incan ruler had conquered any kingdom and set up his government, he ordered that the farmland used to grow corn be extended. For this purpose, he ordered irrigation channels to be constructed. The engineers showed great cleverness and skill in supplying water for the crops, since only scattered sections of the land could grow corn. For this reason, they endeavored to increase its fertility as much as possible.”

4. What engineering technique was described by this sixteenth-century author?

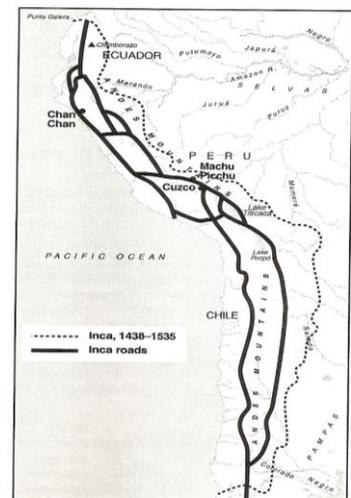
5. Why was this significant achievement? Explain.

Document 5

This map shows the Incan Empire in 1565

6. How did the Incan government unite its empire in the Andes Mountains?

7. What is the significance of this accomplishment? Explain.



Document 6

These photos of the ruins of Machu Picchu provide evidence of the superior building design and farming techniques of the Inca in Peru.



8. What specific farming and building techniques were used by the Incas?

Document 7

“The Aztecs had no professional army but they had professional military officers. When a boy was born his umbilical cord was cut off and dried and then buried on a battle field signifying that his life would be dedicated to warfare. Every able-bodied boy was trained to fight. Soldiers were ordinary people. A vital part of everyday life for the Aztecs was warfare. All able body men were trained to be warriors. In readiness for adult life boys learned about fighting and weapons. To fight in battle was considered a duty and an honor. Warriors helped teach in the calmecacs. The warriors took the students to the wars and taught him how to take a prisoner captive. A boy became a man after he captured his first prisoner.”

9. How important was warfare in the Aztec society?

10. What is the significance of this fact in the rise of the Aztec Empire in Central Mexico?

Prompt:

WERE THE MAYAN, AZTEC, AND INCAN ADVANCED CIVILIZATIONS? WHAT WERE THEIR MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

Task:

Using information from the documents and your knowledge of world history write an essay taking a position discussing and evaluating the achievements of the people of Ancient American civilizations.

- Discuss and evaluate the achievements of the people of Ancient American civilizations.
- Use at least 4 documents in your response.
- Be sure to include specific historical details.
- Your essay must also include additional information from your knowledge of world history.

CIVILIZATIONS OF THE AMERICAS

First Essay Guide

WERE THE MAYAN, AZTEC, AND INCAN ADVANCED CIVILIZATIONS? WHAT WERE THEIR MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

1. **Introduction (THESIS):** Capture interest of the reader. The first paragraph should introduce the argument which may also include some historical context. First and foremost it needs a **hook** or a sentence or two used to reel the reader in. After you create a hook, (for your purpose) write a strong thesis.

A thesis is a position or proposition that a person offers to maintain by argument.
Does your **thesis** answer or arguments the question?

- Must be wide enough to cover the whole research paper.
- Must state some point of view that can be supported and defended by strong argument.
- Informs the reader about your argument and the way you are going to present it.
- In the body of the paper, argue your case.
- You will need to give examples that support the thesis, and these examples may well include narrative.
- You should try to persuade the reader of the validity of your argument, so aim to write an analytical paper in which you discuss the thesis.
- The reader should be able to state your point of view clearly, and able to summarize the evidence of which you base that argument.
- **Take a position!!!!** Say what you think and why...

2. **Argument (BODY):** This is the evidence to support your thesis. Do not pile up facts. This is where you explain your evidence to solidify your argument and also to state if you agree or disagree with the evidence.

- Discuss and evaluate the achievements of the people of Ancient American civilizations.
- Did you use at least 4 documents in your response?
- Is this a specific historical detail?
- Did you include additional information from your knowledge of world history and other sources?
- Did you argue and defend your point of view?

3. **Conclusion:** Summarize the debate in a **short** paragraph. Save a point of interest to end on, a comment on the significance of the subject, what is original about your argument, etc. **Never** add new information in the conclusion. The conclusion should reinforce, in the reader's mind, the persuasiveness of your whole argument. Two things **never** to include here are the words "**In conclusion**" and a happy ending sentence like "**and that is why America is what it is today!**" They are not needed and only show lack of experience in writing essays.

4. **Style:** Write in clear, concise English. Use the least number of words possible to make your point. Write your history paper in **third person**, the **past tense** and **short sentences**.

5. **Paragraphs:** Each paragraph should contain one major point that was discussed in your thesis, which advances your argument.

6. **Quotations:** Keep all **quotes short**. The reader is looking for what **YOU** have to say, not someone else's ideas.