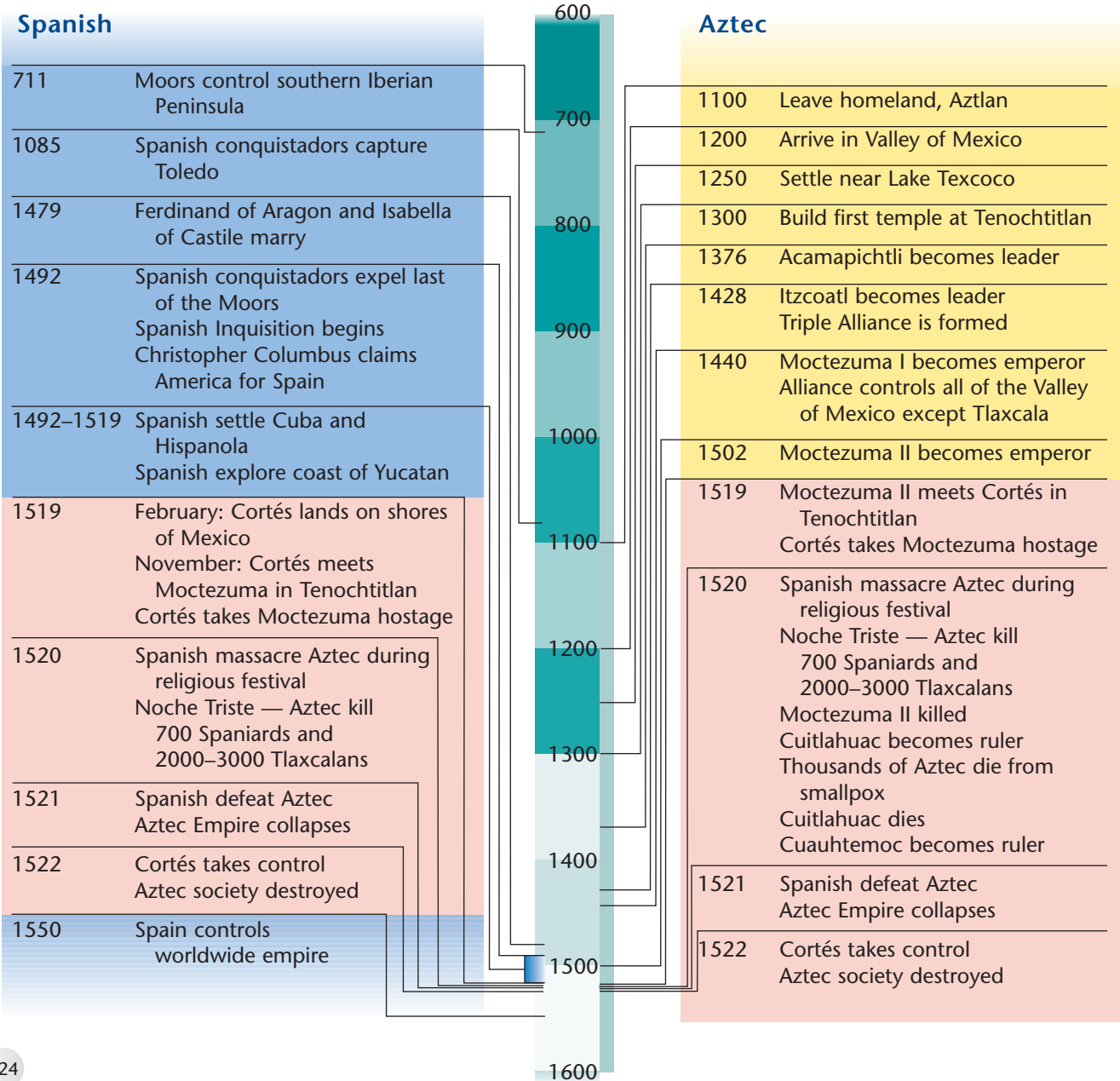


CASE STUDY THREE

How Does Intercultural Contact Impact the Worldviews of Societies?

Two societies, both wealthy and powerful. Two societies building empires, yet completely unknown to each other. In the European Age of Exploration, Spain was beginning to sail the world and was poised to become the first European nation to discover the peoples and wealth of what they called the New World. The Aztec of what is now Mexico were about to meet these unknown Europeans. Their society was about to be changed forever.

- Spanish events
- Aztec events
- shared events



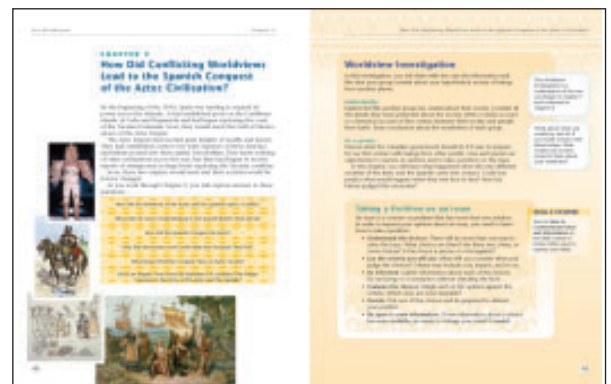
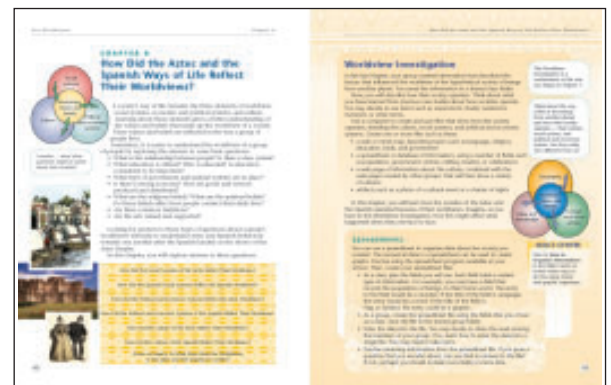
As you study these two societies of the early 16th century, you will

- learn about the influences that shaped their worldview (geography, contact with other groups, ideas and knowledge)
- discover how they lived (their social systems, political and economic systems, and culture)
- understand why the Spanish were able to defeat the Aztec
- understand how the worldviews of both societies affected their contact with each other

Chapter 7: How Did Geography and History Affect the Worldviews of the Aztec and the Spanish?

Chapter 8: How Did the Aztec and the Spanish Ways of Life Reflect Their Worldviews?

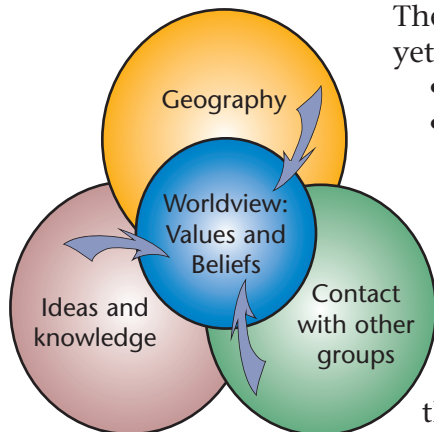
Chapter 9: How Did Conflicting Worldviews Lead to the Spanish Conquest of the Aztec Civilization?



- Read about the key events in the histories of the Spanish and the Aztec by examining the timeline on page 224. When did these two societies come into contact with each other? What do you think happened?
- Recall what you learned about the European attitudes to Indigenous peoples during the Age of Exploration. Predict what the Spanish would have thought of the Aztec.
- Think about what the Aztec would have thought of the Spanish. List the questions that you want to research about the Aztec view of the Spanish.

CHAPTER 7

How Did Geography and History Affect the Worldviews of the Aztec and the Spanish?



The Aztec and the Spanish of 1500 had very different worldviews, yet they both became powerful and controlled vast empires.

- Why do some societies become more powerful than others?
- How does worldview contribute to the development of powerful societies and states?

In this chapter, you will explore how the worldviews of the Aztec and the Spanish were shaped by their physical world, the people they came into contact with, and their beliefs, ideas, and knowledge.

As you work through chapter 7, you will explore answers to these questions:

I wonder ... what other questions might be asked?

How Did Geography Influence the Societies of the Aztec and the Spanish?

How Did the History of the Aztec Affect Their Worldview?

How Did the History of Spain Affect Its Worldview?

Focus on Inquiry: How Did Geography Influence the Pre-Columbian Aztec Worldview?

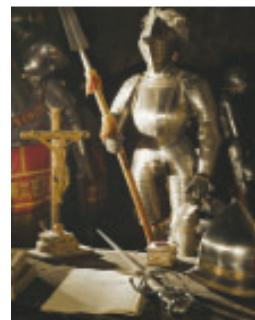
How Did Contact with the Moors Influence Spain?

How Did Contact with Other Meso-American Societies Influence the Aztec?

How Did the Aztec Emperors Become the Most Powerful Rulers in the Valley of Mexico?

How Did the Spanish Monarchy Become So Powerful?

What Aspects of Worldviews Are Reflected in Creation Stories?



Worldview Investigation

Imagine the first contact between two groups who come from very different places with different histories and different worldviews. This happened all the time during the Age of Exploration, but today, we know about even the remotest societies. It is unlikely that we will find more unknown societies on this planet. But imagine if we ever came into contact with beings from another planet. How do you think the people of Earth would react? In many science fiction stories, humans respond with violence; these beings are usually shown as dangerous. Imagine what they might really be like. How would we really respond?

In the Worldview Investigations in this case study, you will develop a simulation to explore these questions. In chapters 7 and 8, you will work in groups to create information and artifacts about imaginary societies of another planet. In chapter 9, you will share your simulation with the class. The class will decide how to respond to your beings. Begin by creating a collection of evidence about the inhabitants, their worldview, and the factors that have shaped it: geography, ideas and knowledge, and contact with other groups.

1. Create a map of the home world of the beings from another planet. Include enough detail so the geographic problems and challenges they face are clear.
2. Create a timeline showing the history of the beings. Include when certain ideas and knowledge were discovered and important contacts with other groups.
3. Create other artifacts, such as creation stories, biographies of important citizens, and drawings or photographs of important inventions.
4. Use the shared folder on the computer to hold all the simulation files.

In this chapter, you will learn how the geography and histories of the Aztec and the Spanish influenced their worldviews. Their societies were completely unknown to each other. Imagine, as you have in this Worldview Investigation, how this might affect what happened when they met.

Think about what might happen if the people of Earth make contact with beings from another world. How would our worldviews affect what we do?

This hypothetical situation may not be so far-fetched. Exploration of space has discovered many solar systems with a variety of planets, some of which could support life. The United States government supports SETI, the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence, which listens for transmissions from beings on distant planets. Suppose that they intercept messages from another world.

Folders and Files

A shared folder is located on one computer, usually a file server, and is available to several people at once over the class or school network. Learn how to access a shared folder and do the following:

- Use **Save as** to select the group's shared folder or to save to your personal folder.
- Within a folder, create other folders to organize files.
- The file extension indicates what type of file it is. For example, file names that end in **.ppt** are slideshows. Files that end in **.doc** are word processing files. Files that end in **.jpg** are images.

SKILLS CENTRE

Turn to **How to Interpret and Make Maps** in the Skills Centre to review how to use technology to make a map.

How Did Geography Influence the Societies of the Aztec and the Spanish?

The Aztec

plateau: a large raised area of mostly level land

Mexico is a land of great diversity. The geography of Mexico includes deserts, mountains, tropical forests, ranchland, rich farmland, and seacoasts on the east and west. In the present time, it is bordered by the United States to the north, the Gulf of Mexico to the east, the Caribbean Sea, Belize, and Guatemala to the southeast, and the Pacific Ocean on the west and south. The two largest rivers, the Rio Grande and the Usamacinta, run through Mexico, one in the northwest and one in the southeast. Other smaller rivers empty mainly into the Gulf of Mexico.

Much of northern Mexico is desert. The harsh Chihuahua Desert covers the central and eastern part of Mexico, and the Sonoran Desert covers north-central Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. Today, only 10% of the land in Mexico can produce crops.

Most of the major mountain ranges are located in the central **plateau** of Mexico. Some of the mountain peaks are 3000 metres high. The large basin, 60 kilometres wide and 80 kilometres long, situated between the mountain ranges, is referred to as the Valley of Mexico. Temperatures are almost always springlike in the valley. Despite being so far south, the altitude moderates the temperature.

Southern Mexico has dense forests and a tropical climate with lots of rainfall. Tropical beaches line both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

Relief of Mexico



Geography of Mexico



Look at the map of **pre-Columbian** societies in Meso-America. Most of the original societies, including the Aztec, lived in the central basin, the Valley of Mexico. At this time, the basin had plenty of water from a system of five shallow lakes, the largest one being Lake Texcoco (*taysh-KOE-koe*). The lakes affected the climate of the lands surrounding them. **Lake Texcoco was** at the lowest elevation in the Valley, so all drainage flowed into it, making it **saline**. This meant that the soil around the lake was also saline and not suitable for agriculture.

The **Valley of Mexico became the centre of the Aztec civilization**. The larger cities of the empire, located around the lakes, had only small agricultural areas around them. As populations increased, more city dwellers had to rely on the farmers in outlying areas to meet their food needs. This had an effect on the social system. The nobility and elite always lived in the cities. The people in the outlying areas were usually farmers and others who made use of natural resources.

There were **different ecological zones** within the Mexican basin. As a result, the people who worked the land developed a variety of farming techniques and grew different kinds of food in each zone. This diversity of resources from the different regions **led to the development of a market system** for the distribution of food and other items. Canals and waterways became the main means of transportation.

pre-Columbian: referring to the time in the Americas before Columbus arrived

saline: salty; consisting of salt

ecological zone: a physical area with specific traits of climate, soil, altitude, and so on that determine its particular plants and animals



Mexico's central plateau



The group we know as the Aztec called themselves the Mexica (*may-SHEE-kah*). This is the origin of the name of the country Mexico.

The terms *pre-Columbian* and *the Americas* are defining people and lands from a European ethnocentric viewpoint. The Indigenous societies of the continent did not define themselves in relation to Columbus or as living in the Americas.

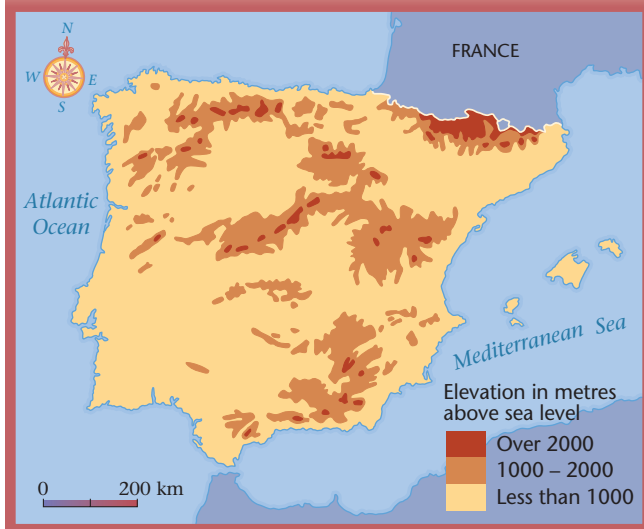
The Spanish

Spain occupies about 80% of the Iberian Peninsula. The Mediterranean Sea is on the southeast side of Spain, the Atlantic Ocean is on the west side, and the Strait of Gibraltar separates it from Africa. Towards the end of the 15th century, the Spanish monarchs wanted to increase the wealth and prestige of Spain by exploring and colonizing new lands. Spain's location on the Atlantic Ocean was an important factor in their decision. Spaniards living in the coastal regions were already used to travelling the seas for fishing and trading.

Spain has several large mountain ranges. The Pyrenees is the largest range and separates Spain from France on the north and northeast. The Pyrenees block easy access to the rest of Europe.

The main rivers of Spain flow west to the Atlantic Ocean and south to the Mediterranean Sea. **Almost all of the rivers are fast flowing and difficult to navigate.**

Relief of the Iberian Peninsula



Geography of the Iberian Peninsula



Traditional windmills of La Mancha in the meseta, the central plateau of Spain



The central plateau of Spain, called the Meseta Central, is almost treeless. The summers are so dry that droughts are frequent. The area is divided into northern and southern sections by irregular mountain ranges or sierras. There are narrow valleys between many of the mountains. The central region of Spain is quite isolated from the rest of Spain and from Europe.

The northern coastal plain is very narrow, often no more than 30 kilometres wide. It is often broken up by mountains that descend to the sea and form rocky cliffs. The best harbours are located in the northwestern coastal area.

The climate of Spain is generally rainy in the north and moderated by the ocean; the winters are mild and summers are cool, with only slight variations in temperature. The southern two-thirds of the country is very dry with very little rainfall. In Seville, Cordoba, and Granada, the summer temperatures often reach 50° Celsius. When it does rain in these areas, the storms are often intense but short. Most of Spain receives very little precipitation.

Throughout most of its history, Spain was made up of individual kingdoms. The mountains and the difficulty in navigating the rivers were often the dividing lines between these separate kingdoms. This regionalism helped shape Spain's history and culture.

semi-nomadic: partially settled and partially moving around

incentive: a motivation

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. Many Meso-American civilizations, including the Aztec, established themselves around the lakes of the Valley of Mexico. Brainstorm the advantages this location provided to these societies.
2. a. Imagine what a **semi-nomadic** lifestyle would have been like in the harsh northern desert. Describe how the people would meet their basic needs of water, food, shelter, and social interaction. How might meeting these needs in this environment affect the values and beliefs of the Mexica?
b. How might the worldview of groups living in the northern desert areas of Mexico differ from those living in the tropical south?
3. Examine the maps of the Iberian Peninsula on page 230. In what ways might the worldview of individuals living in the interior of Spain in 1500 have been different from those living along the coastline? Explain your reasoning.
4. In the 1500s, Spain established the largest overseas empire of any European country. Look at the map of the Iberian Peninsula. Explain why Spain's location and geography would have been an **incentive** for exploration.
5. What are some of the ways in which Alberta's geography affects our lifestyle? What might Alberta's geography contribute to our worldviews?

How Did the History of the Aztec Affect Their Worldview?

The Long Migration

codex: an ancient manuscript in book form

destiny: all that is supposedly predetermined to happen to someone or something in spite of all efforts to change or prevent it

The pronunciation of Nahuatl words may be difficult at first because Nahuatl uses letters in different combinations and sound patterns than European languages.

I wonder ... how close are the Comanche and Shoshone languages to the Nahuatl language used by the Aztec?

One story tells that the Mexica left Aztlan because they had offended their main god, *Huitzilopochtli*, by cutting down a forbidden tree. They were forced to wander until their god told them where to settle.

The Aztec, who originally referred to themselves as the Mexica (*may-SHEE-kah*), were one of several Nahuatl-speaking (*NAH-watl*) groups that included the Culhua-Mexica (*KOOL-hwa-may-SHEE-kah*), the Mexica, and the Tenocha (*tay-NOH-chah*) who left the desert-like country of northern Mexico and migrated southward over many, many years. Related groups, such as the Comanche and Shoshone Nations, moved northward into the plains and Rocky Mountain regions of what is now the United States. Aztec (Mexica) origin stories tell of their leaving their homeland, Aztlan, an island city in the middle of a lake, probably far northwest of present-day Mexico City, around 1100. For 200 years, they led a semi-nomadic life looking for a sign that would tell them where to settle. After a long and difficult migration, they finally reached the Valley of Mexico.

Throughout their migration, they followed what they believed were the orders of their patron god, *Huitzilopochtli* (*weets-eel-oh-POTCH-tee*), who spoke to their priests. On instructions from *Huitzilopochtli*, the priests would force their followers to keep moving. The Aztec followed these instructions and continued their difficult journey southward through the desert. They believed they were the chosen people of *Huitzilopochtli*, the god who would lead them to the land of their **destiny**.



Aztec drawing from the *Boturini Codex* showing a part of their long migration

Their devotion to Huitzilopochtli often created many hardships. When he told them to move, they did so, even if there was no time to harvest their crops.

Sometime during the 12th or 13th century, after several generations of working their way southward, the Aztec came to the Valley of Mexico, led by their chieftain, Tenoch.

The region was already occupied by a large number of city-states. When the Aztec arrived in the Valley, the best lands were already taken. The societies of the established city-states considered the Aztec to be a barbarous and uncultured people. As a result, they were driven from one location to another and not allowed to settle in one place.

However, by the 14th century, many of these city-states established alliances and formed confederations. Among the confederations were the independent societies of the Tepanecs (*tay-PAH-nakes*), Cholulas (*choh-LOO-lahs*), and Tlaxcalans (*tlahsh-KAH-lahns*). These societies would have conflicts with the Aztec.

incarnation: a deity or spirit taking a physical form

Legend has it that the Culhua (*KOOL-wah*), the most powerful society in the Valley, forced the Aztec to live on the rocky land of Tizapan (*tee-SAH-pahn*), an area full of poisonous snakes. The Culhua thought the snakes would kill the Aztec. To their surprise, the Aztec captured the snakes and roasted them for food.

I wonder ... what did the Culhua think about the Aztec after they survived the poisonous snakes?

Huitzilopochtli: The Patron God

The creation stories of the origin of the Mexica and their migration include stories of the birth of Huitzilopochtli, the main god of the Aztec. The Aztec believed he was the **incarnation** of the sun and struggled against the forces of night to keep humans alive. In one story, the old goddess Coatlicue (*koh-ah-TLEE-kway*) found herself pregnant. Her eldest daughter, Coyolxauhqui (*koh-yohl-SHAHW-kee*), convinced her 400 brothers to assist her in killing their mother. The unborn Huitzilopochtli learned of the plot and just in time, burst from Coatlicue's belly fully grown and fully armed. He killed Coyolxauhqui and her brothers. Coyolxauhqui rose to become the moon and the brothers rose to become the stars. The Aztec believed that Huitzilopochtli became the sun, which battled and overcame the moon and stars each day as he rose into the sky.



Most cultures have stories and beliefs about the creation of the world and the origins of its people.

I wonder ... what are some creation stories believed by cultures in Canada today?

Aztec god Huitzilopochtli, from the *Florentine Codex*

Tenochtitlan, The City of Tenoch

The heart fell onto a stone, and from that heart sprouted a nopal cactus which is now so large and beautiful that an eagle makes his nest [there] ... You will find [him] at all hours of the day, and around him you will see scattered many feathers — green, blue, red, yellow and white ... And to this place ... I give the name Tenochtitlan.

— Eduardo Moctezuma, late 20th century

The Founding of Tenochtitlan. The eagle symbolizes both the sun and Huitzilopochtli; the red fruit of the cactus represents the human hearts offered as sacrifice.

After being forced to keep moving for so many years, the Aztec finally settled on a swampy island in the middle of Lake Texcoco. They knew this was the land of their destiny, for they saw an eagle perched on a nopal cactus, holding a rattlesnake — the sign that had been foretold to their leader, Tenoch, by the god Huitzilopochtli. At that location, he and his people were to build their city and honour Huitzilopochtli.



The city they built was called Tenochtitlan (*tay-noach-tee-TLAHN*), the city of Tenoch. The lands surrounding Tenochtitlan were occupied by the three most powerful societies in the Valley: the Chichimec (*chee-CHEE-make*), the Culhuacan (*kool-WAK-kahn*), and the Tepanec.

Although the Aztec settled, they still had to deal with continuing tensions with the neighbouring peoples on the mainland. Despite these problems, they worked hard to improve the quality of their lives.

In order to survive these difficult times, many Aztec worked as mercenaries and servants for their most powerful neighbours, the Tepanec. They had learned patience, toughness, and other traits during their migration and they had become ferocious warriors. They were skilled, hard workers. They built aqueducts to bring fresh water to the island city and connected the city to the mainland by three causeways.

Tenochtitlan proved to be an excellent site. The Aztec could travel by water to trade with other city-states along the lakes in the Valley. By 1500, the city was larger than any city in Europe. Historians believe at least 1 000 000 people lived in the Valley, with over 150 000 living on the island city alone. The limited access to the city through the causeways provided protection from possible attacks.

Over time, the Aztec absorbed the manners and traditions of the societies around them. Their traditional society had been based on constant movement, but after settling at Lake Texcoco, they began to develop a new culture built on the history of their migration, their strong religious beliefs, and the legacy of societies that had flourished before them.

I wonder ... what other cities in the world use canals as streets?

Information gained from archaeological studies illustrates that as long ago as 7500 BCE, people were hunting huge mammoths in the central Valley of Mexico.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

Form groups and choose two of the following to discuss:

1. Imagine that you are a teenaged boy or girl travelling with the Aztec during their long migration. What types of hardships might you have to endure? Do you think that people who experience hardships would have a different worldview than those whose lives are easier? Explain.
2. What personal qualities would the Aztec have had to develop in order to survive their difficult journey?
3. Huitzilopochtli is described as a demanding god. Why do you think it was important for the Aztec to believe that they had a patron god? Why do you think they believed he took on the role of the sun and not that of another heavenly body?
4. How might the Aztec destiny have been different if their belief in Huitzilopochtli had not been so unquestioning?
5. The Aztec eventually build an empire in Meso-America. How might the Aztec worldview have been influenced by how they were treated by other societies? Explain.

How Did the History of Spain Affect Its Worldview?

Through its history, the Iberian Peninsula had successive waves of invasion and colonization by different peoples. The Romans arrived around the beginning of the 3rd century and maintained power until the 5th century. The legacy left by the Romans included a Christian belief system. Northern European tribes that included Ostrogoths, Franks, and the Visigoths then established themselves in much of southern Europe and throughout the peninsula. These groups also followed the Christian faith and dominated the peninsula until 711 when the Moors crossed over the Strait of Gibraltar from North Africa. They dominated most of the southern region of the peninsula, called Al-Andalus.

The Reconquista

Muslim rule in Spain lasted more than 700 years. From the 1100s on, Cordoba and then Granada became important cultural centres in Europe. Muslims, Jews, and Christians were all allowed to practise their own beliefs. A few northern regions, however, resisted the Muslim invaders and remained Christian.

Over the centuries, the Christian kingdoms became more powerful and continuously struggled to take back the southern lands ruled by the Muslims. At this time, the people in most of Europe followed only one religion, Christianity. Muslims and Jews were often not accepted in the rest of Europe because they were not Christians.

Iberian Peninsula, 1147

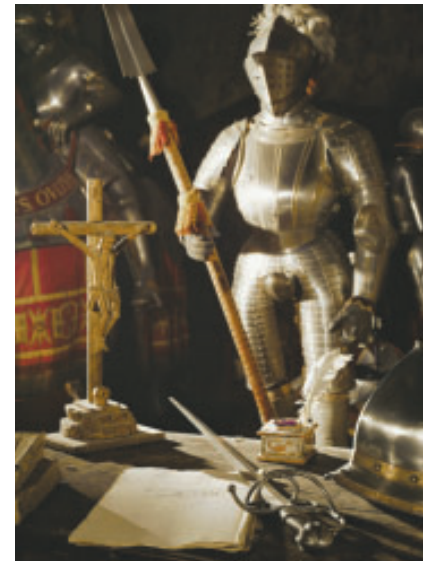


The move to retake the Iberian land under Muslim control, the reconquest, was called the Reconquista in Spanish. The Reconquista was first led by the rulers of the Kingdom of Castile who captured the Muslim city of Toledo in 1085. During the 1100s, the rulers of Aragon and Catalonia united their armies to fight the Muslims. The pope declared his support for this crusade in the 1200s, and Castile captured the cities of Cordoba and Cadiz. The Muslims now held only the one small kingdom, Granada, in southern Spain. Granada was captured by the **conquistadors** of King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella I in 1492; Moorish control of Spain was now over.

These wars between the Moors and the kingdoms of Spain were intermittent, but lasted for over 700 years. **Many Christians believed that it was their duty to carry forth the word of God and convert non-believers to Roman Catholicism.** Spanish conquistadors carried on this tradition, as they felt they were fighting for God and for their country. They fought for both religious and nationalistic reasons.

Although the Muslims were defeated, there were still many separate kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula with regional loyalties. The two largest kingdoms, Aragon and Castile, were unified with the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile who became king and queen of the combined areas in 1479. At this time, Spain was not yet a nation as we know it today; the Iberian Peninsula was made up of several kingdoms brought under the authority of the monarchy.

conquistador: one who conquers; specifically, a leader in the Spanish conquest of America and especially of Mexico and Peru in the 16th century



Conquistador sword and armour belonging to King Charles V. The photo also shows a letter written by Cortés to the king.

The Reconquista, 1147–1269



The Spanish believed the conquistadors symbolized the ideal man: an individual who was a dedicated Roman Catholic, a strong and valiant soldier, and a proud Spaniard. The idealized conquistador was similar to a medieval knight.

Following the Protestant Reformation in Europe, many individuals began to realize that one could be a loyal citizen of the state and yet follow religious beliefs that differed from their ruler.

Spanish Inquisition

At this time, throughout most of Europe, a citizen was considered a loyal subject only if he or she practised the same religious beliefs as the ruler in power. After the Reconquista, the Roman Catholic faith was considered the only true faith in Spain. Ferdinand and Isabella used this to their advantage. Isabella, in particular, believed that the country would be united only if everyone followed one religion. Ferdinand saw the struggles around religion as an opportunity to control the people. In 1492, the two Roman Catholic monarchs reinstated the Spanish Inquisition. The Inquisition was both a civil and a religious court. Originally, the court was set up to judge if the Jews and Muslims who had converted to Roman Catholicism were true Roman Catholics. Soon it was judging any citizen who was accused of not following the Roman Catholic faith. If the court found an individual guilty, punishment could include confinement to dungeons, torture, or death. If an individual was simply accused, but not proven guilty, property was confiscated and the person was forbidden from holding any public office. Eventually, all Jews and Muslims, including those who had converted to Roman Catholicism, were expelled from Spain even though many of their families had lived in Spain for 700 years. The Spanish Inquisition did not officially end until 1834.

Desire for Exploration

The Reconquista came at a time in history when Western Europeans were benefiting from better economies, new technologies, and more stable government institutions. Spain was ruled by a strong new monarchy. Ferdinand and Isabella proved to be competent rulers who worked to extend the powers of Spain. The Spanish were developing a strong desire for exploration to new, undiscovered lands because the routes to the East around Africa had already been explored by other countries. They looked in two directions for expansion: towards the Western Mediterranean and west across the Atlantic. In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed west across the Atlantic, reaching land in the Caribbean and claiming it for Spain.

As the Spanish monarchy began to build its empire, it had religious, economic, and political motives. The monarchy felt that an empire should serve Spain economically. Ferdinand and Isabella dealt with any new lands the same way they did with the Iberian kingdoms recaptured during the Reconquista: resources and goods from anywhere within the empire were considered the rightful property of Spain. They also sent missionaries to these lands to teach the beliefs and customs of the Roman Catholic Church. When the conquistadors came into contact with societies of the New World, they carried forth the idea that they were serving both God and country. Spanish ethnocentrism led them to regard their culture and religion as far superior to any other; they treated other cultures and religions as inferior. They used these attitudes to justify their harsh treatment of the peoples they conquered and their forced conversion to Roman Catholicism.

From a tapestry showing the meeting of Columbus with Ferdinand and Isabella. With the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1479, most of Europe treated the two kingdoms, Aragon and Castile, as being unified. However, Ferdinand and Isabella really just laid the foundation for a unified Spain. Even under their rule, the two regions continued to have separate parliaments and laws, and remained quite distinct from each other. It was not until 1715 that a united constitution was established to formally join them together.



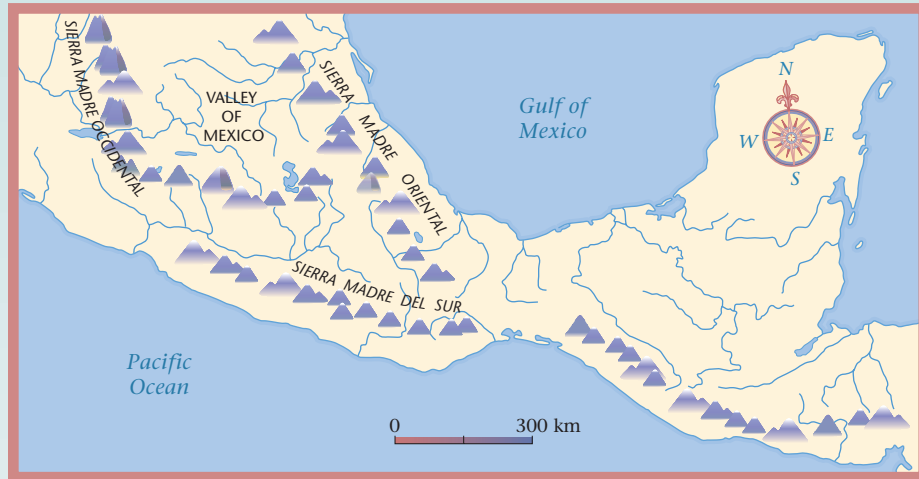
REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. Explain why the worldview of Spain might have been different from other Western European kingdoms. Consider the effects of both Spain's geography and history.
2. In what ways might the wars to unite the country have influenced the Spanish worldview?
3. Many Jews and Muslims outwardly converted to Roman Catholicism but continued to practise their religion in private. What would have been their reasons to outwardly convert? How did the forced conversions reflect the Spanish worldview of the time?
4. What does the desire for new lands tell you about the Spanish worldview at this time?

FOCUS ON INQUIRY

How Did Geography Influence the Pre-Columbian Aztec Worldview?

Meso-America (1519) refers to a geographic region in which many of the cultures shared common characteristics such as religion, dress, trade, agriculture, lifestyle, and technology. It refers to the area between North America and South America, in particular, the areas of present-day Mexico and Central America.



Tenochtitlan and Area, 1519



Tenochtitlan was built on an island on Lake Texcoco, one of the two saltwater lakes. The other lakes in the Valley were freshwater lakes. Why would it be useful to the peoples of the Valley to have both kinds of lakes?

History Tells Us...

The Mexica (or Aztec) legendary search for a new homeland ended in the part of Meso-America known as the Valley of Mexico. This high central Mexican plateau provided all the essentials of life: water; rich, deep soil; all kinds of plant and animal life; and a comfortable climate.

Surrounded by forested mountain ranges on three sides, and large hills on the fourth, the area was easy to protect from invaders. One of the ranges, the Sierra Madres, had rich deposits of gold and silver. The large interconnected lakes covering the length of the Valley provided a reliable source of water and a fast and efficient transportation system. All of these features were part of the geography of the area.

Within 100 years of their arrival in the Valley, the Aztec had become the most prosperous community in the Valley. They formed alliances with the stronger city-states, and within 200 years of their arrival, controlled much of Meso-America from the Pacific to the Caribbean.

Using Your Inquiry Skills

In this activity, you will be using skills related to the Processing phase of the Inquiry Model. You will create and use a topographic map of the Valley of Mexico in 1500 to explain how geography influenced the Aztec worldview.

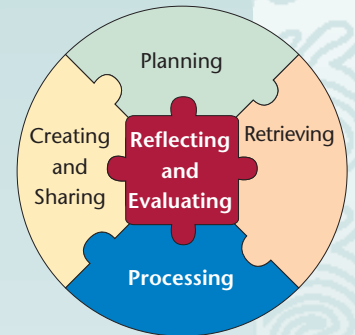
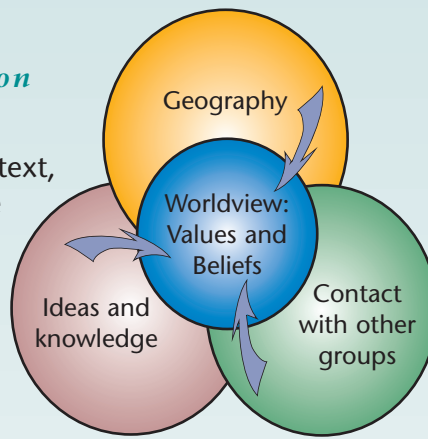
How did geography influence the pre-Columbian Aztec worldview?

Processing Phase

Step 1 — Choose pertinent information and create a map

Use resources such as historical atlases, your text, other school library resources, and an outline map of Meso-America.

- Draw the topographical features of the Valley of Mexico during pre-Columbian times.
- Label major cities, lakes, volcanoes, and mountain ranges.
- Use symbols to identify farming areas, forested areas, causeways, aqueducts, and the gold and silver mines of the Sierra Madres.
- Include other interesting features such as terraces and dikes.



I wonder ... why wouldn't the Internet be the best source for finding map features, especially for 500 years ago?

Step 2 — Make connections and inferences

According to your map and other sources, the Aztec lived in a highly populated region with good farmland; lots of natural resources; fresh and salt water; waterways for transportation; fuel for cooking, heat, and light; a mild climate; plenty of fish and wild game; and plentiful and varied foods and spices.

As a class, review what you have already learned about worldview from other case studies. Then, brainstorm how the three elements of the Aztec worldview in 1500 might have been influenced by their location or geography?

Step 3 — Share your understandings

Use your topographic map to help explain to a partner or group how you think geography influenced the Aztec worldview.

Reflecting and Evaluating Phase

- Working alone, think about what you learned about the Processing phase of the inquiry process.
- What types of activities are done during the Processing phase?
- What parts of this inquiry did you find most challenging and/or frustrating?
- Which geographical feature do you think most impacted the Aztec worldview?

How Did Contact with the Moors Influence Spain?

Over 4000 Spanish words came from the Arabic language.

epoch: a period of history marked by notable events

For almost 700 years, the Islamic Empire controlled a huge empire stretching through Asia, northern Africa, and into the Iberian Peninsula. However, it never had control over the rest of western Europe. When the Moors conquered regions of the Iberian Peninsula, they imported their Islamic culture. During the Middle Ages, the city of Cordoba, in southern Spain, was looked upon by all of Europe as a major centre of learning and the arts. The library in Cordoba contained some 600 000 manuscripts. Historian James Cleuge explains the importance of Cordoba in his book *Spain in the Modern World*.

For there was nothing like it, at the epoch, in the rest of Europe. The best minds in that continent looked to Spain for everything which most clearly differentiates a human being from a tiger.



Mozarabic manuscript illumination of the Angel and the Dragon

The legacy left by the Muslims influenced Spanish learning, architecture, and design. The Muslims had developed magnificent architectural styles and exquisite mosaic tiles and carpets. Since Islam prohibited the depiction of the human or animal form in artwork, geometrical shapes were used in sculpture and art. Muslim scholars, along with Jewish scholars, were involved in the revival of the study of ancient Greek and Roman culture and philosophy.

The legacy included the following:

- important schools of astronomy, mathematics, and architecture
- illuminated manuscripts and murals from the 9th and 10th centuries that showed the strong influence of the Islamic and Byzantine artistic style known as Mozarabic. Mozarabic is known as the first genuinely Spanish national art

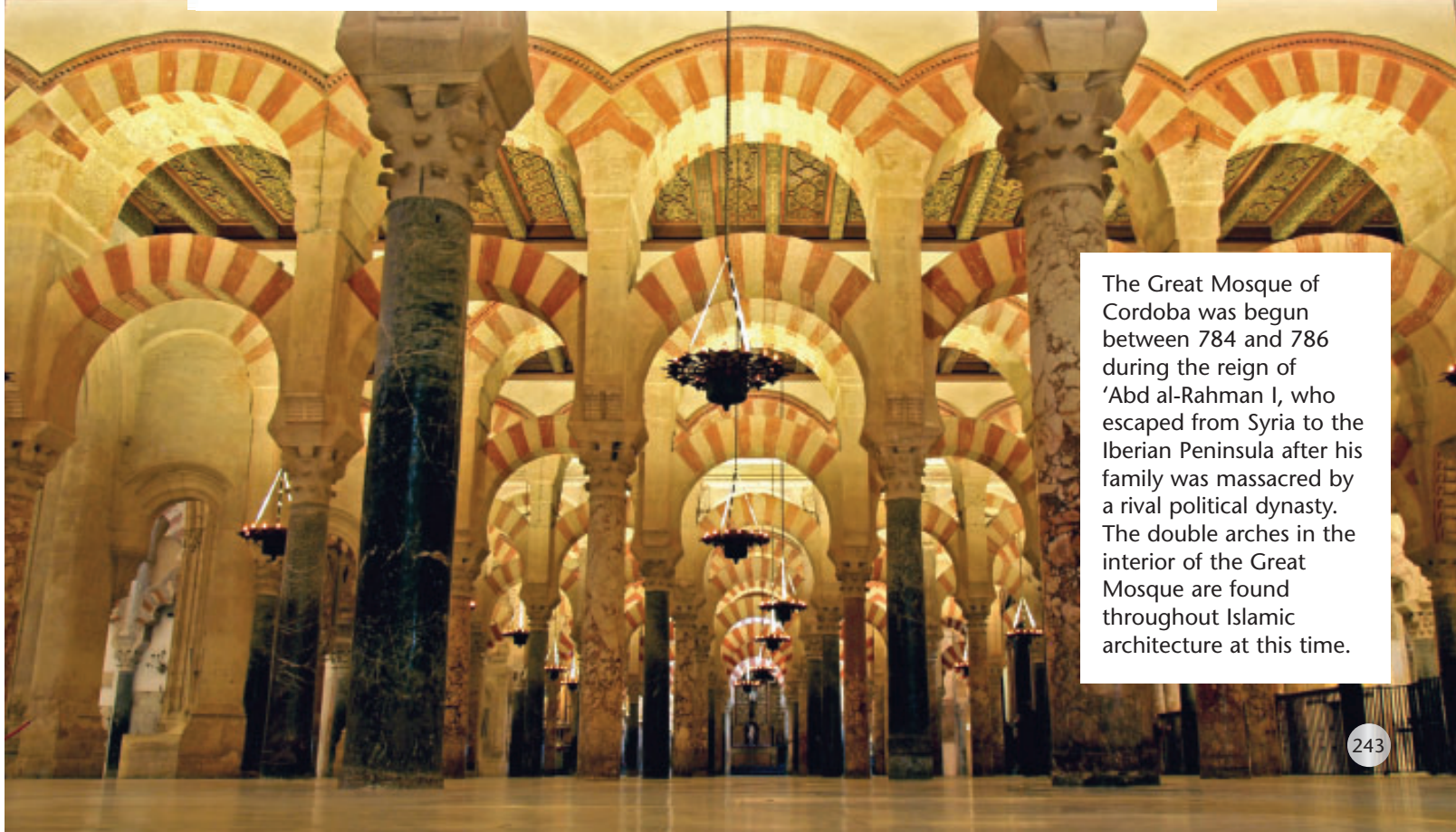
Avarroes, also called Ibn Rushd (1126–1198), from Cordoba, was regarded by medieval Europeans as the greatest scholar of the Muslim world. He was a doctor of medicine, a philosopher, and a judge. He became the chief judge in Cordoba and the personal physician of the Muslim rulers. He is most famous for his commentaries on the works of Aristotle.

Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) was a Jewish philosopher, physician, and jurist. He is considered the greatest intellectual of medieval Judaism. His contributions in religion, medicine, and philosophy are greatly valued. Maimonides wrote both in Arabic and Hebrew.

- great libraries containing books on varied topics such as architecture, astrology, astronomy, pharmacology, psychology, zoology, botany, optics, chemistry, physics, mathematics, navigation, and history
- a large collection of classical documents, especially works of the ancient philosophers such as Aristotle. These classical works were first translated from Greek into Arabic, and then later into Latin by the Spaniards. The books revealed the Greek belief in questioning and in logic, ideas that were later used by the European humanists. At this time, many Jewish scholars translated important works from Arabic to Hebrew.
- beautiful buildings that included enclosed courtyards with fountains and decorative tiles. Magnificent palaces and mosques were built in the cities. The Great Mosque of Cordoba is one of the most famous Moorish structures.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. How might the legacy of the Moors have influenced the Spanish worldview so that it supported exploration and becoming an imperialist state?
2. Do you think expelling Jews and Muslims ended up harming Spain in any way? Explain.

The image shows the interior of the Great Mosque of Cordoba, featuring a series of double arches supported by columns. The arches are decorated with alternating red and white stripes. The columns are made of various materials, including marble and stone. The lighting is warm, highlighting the architectural details.

The Great Mosque of Cordoba was begun between 784 and 786 during the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman I, who escaped from Syria to the Iberian Peninsula after his family was massacred by a rival political dynasty. The double arches in the interior of the Great Mosque are found throughout Islamic architecture at this time.

How Did Contact with Other Meso-American Societies Influence the Aztec?

Each of the Meso-American societies had its own unique customs and traditions. The societies also had many similarities because they all had incorporated the ideas and beliefs of the ancient Meso-American civilizations that had existed before them. In Meso-America, cultures of the past greatly influenced the societies that came after them.

Earlier Societies of Meso-America

The three greatest earlier civilizations in the Valley of Mexico were the Olmec (*OHL-make*) (1200 to 400 BCE), the Teotihuacan (*tay-oh-tee-WAHK-ahn*) (peak of power between 150 and 450), and the Toltec (*TOHL-take*) (900 to 1150).



Olmec head

The Olmec

The Olmec are said to be the founding society, or mother culture, of all Meso-American civilizations. They lived in the lowlands near the Gulf of Mexico in the south-central part of Mexico now known as Veracruz. San Lorenzo is the oldest known Olmec centre. They are considered to be the greatest sculptors of the early Meso-American societies. Their most striking sculptures were the colossal heads. The Olmec had several gods, including a fire god, a rain god, a corn god, and the **Feathered Serpent**.

The Pyramid of the Sun in the city of Teotihuacan, 232 metres square and 79.5 metres high, was the largest structure in the Western hemisphere until a building to house the space program at Kennedy Space Centre was built in the late 1960s.



The Teotihuacan

The word *Teotihuacan* refers to the ancient civilization and to its **altepetl** where a mysterious people dwelled. The altepetl was located about 40 kilometres northeast of what is now Mexico City. The Aztec, who were impressed by the enormous ruins left behind by the Teotihuacan, believed it was a holy place where the sun, moon, and universe were created. The name meant “City of Gods.” In building their city of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec copied the way Teotihuacan was laid out into four quarters with two large avenues crossing at right angles and the temples in the city centre. Within the centre of Teotihuacan was a temple to the god **Quetzalcoatl** (*kets-ahl-KOH-ahtl*).

altepetl: a Meso-American city-state

The Toltec

The capital city of the Toltec was called Tula (*TOO-lah*), located about 100 kilometres northwest of present-day Mexico City. The Toltec society had the greatest impact on Aztec culture. The Aztec believed the Toltec were masters at creating a refined civilization. The Aztec wrote many poems and told many stories about the Toltec.

Totems from the city of Tula



The legacy of the ancient civilizations and the contact with different societies they encountered during their migrations influenced Aztec religious beliefs and practices, social structure, architecture, and art.

Each time they lived among new people, they absorbed many of their customs and beliefs. They learned new skills that would help them survive their long journey. Later, these new skills helped them build a new city and create a new society at Tenochtitlan. By the time the Mexica settled, they had learned and modelled new behaviours and attitudes so that they were able to command respect from their neighbours.

Some historians suggest the Aztec destroyed whatever form of documents they may have had of their life before they settled at Tenochtitlan in order to reinvent themselves as the direct descendants of past civilizations such as the Toltec.

Effects of Other Meso-American Societies on Aztec Culture

Religious Beliefs and Practices	Social Systems	Architecture and Art
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the belief that gods could take on different forms such as the jaguar (an earth mother goddess) and the serpent (a water goddess) a belief in many gods, including Quetzalcoatl (the gentle plumed serpent god), Tezcatlipoca (<i>tays-caht-lee-POH-kah</i>), Smoking Mirror (who had a war-like nature), and the god of rain Tlaloc (<i>TLAH-lohk</i>) religious practices that centred on seasonal cycles, emphasizing astronomy and the calendar a belief that human sacrifices were necessary to sustain the gods with human hearts and blood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a hierarchical society with both a noble class, priests, and commoners a government with a strong central authority use of militaristic practices to build an empire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> huge pyramid-shaped temples to honour the gods beautiful murals, large sculptures, and monuments of both humans and animals, mainly with religious motifs the art of fine jewellery making, ceramic pottery, mosaic, metalworking, and featherworks

REFLECT AND RESPOND

- With a partner, discuss whether the Aztec society can be considered a distinct society if most of their culture was based on the knowledge and ideas of earlier civilizations.
- The Aztec benefited from the legacies left by early Meso-American societies. What legacy has been left to Canadians by early North American First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, and by the French and English explorers and settlers? Consider such things as Canadian sports, food, and architecture.
- The Aztec modelled themselves on the Toltec. What individual or group would you choose as a role model? Why? How can role models influence our worldview?

INFLUENCE

The Toltec

The Toltec were a warrior society that dominated most of central Mexico between the 10th and 12th centuries. Their capital city was Tula in what is now the Mexican region of Hidalgo. Cholula is considered to be a Toltec site. Their language was Nahuatl, the same language spoken by the Aztec. They were highly developed stone workers, master builders, and wonderful artisans. Their patron god was Quetzalcoatl. Toltec ceremonies included sun worship and human sacrifice. About 900, it is believed they attacked and burned the city of Teotihuacan.

The Aztec used the deserted city-state of Tula, a Toltec urban centre, as the architectural model for their capital city, Tenochtitlan. They adopted Tula's architecture and sculptural features. In fact, they so wanted to be like the Toltec, they even looted the ceremonial centres of Tula and erected the stolen sculptures in their own temples. They thought the patron god of the Toltec, Quetzalcoatl, had given his people knowledge and wisdom, so the Toltec had been very learned and wise. They credited the Toltec with inventing medicine and pictographic writing. The word *tolteca* became synonymous with *artisan* because of the beautiful works of art, including fine featherwork and mosaics created by the Toltec. The Aztec military orders of the Coyote, the Jaguar, and the Eagle originated with the Toltec. The rise of the Toltec resulted in the rise of **militarism** in Meso-America.

**The Toltec were truly wise;
they conversed with their own hearts...**

— *Codice Matritense de la Real Academia*

**The Toltecs, the people of Quetzalcoatl,
were very skillful.
Nothing was difficult for them to do.
They cut precious stones,
wrought gold,
and made many works of art
and marvelous ornaments of feathers.
Truly they were skillful.**

— Manuscript of 1558

About 1200, Toltec society crumbled, it is believed, because of conflicts among different groups within their culture.

militarism: the tendency, belief, or policy that a country should maintain a strong military force and be prepared to use it to advance national interests

Quetzalcoatl was a god common across Meso-American societies. Quetzalcoatl was known as the feathered or plumed serpent, a god of wind, fire, fertility, wisdom, and practical knowledge.

The remains of a temple at Tula, the Toltec centre



PROFILE

Itzcoatl

tribute: money and goods demanded on an ongoing basis

The dates given for rulers often refer to the dates of their reign, which is abbreviated *r.* For instance, Itzcoatl (*r.* 1428–1440) means that Itzcoatl ruled for 12 years, from 1428 to 1440.

The first home of the Aztec in the Valley of Mexico had been with the Tepanec on Lake Chapultepec (*chah-pool-TAY-pake*). The Aztec had developed a favoured status with the Tepanec because they agreed to work as mercenaries and labourers. The ruler of the Tepanec eventually wanted greater power, and the relationship between the two societies became strained.

In 1428, the Aztec appointed a new leader, Itzcoatl (*eets-KOH-ahtl*) (*r.* 1428–1440). He wanted to end the domination of the Tepanec. He immediately formed a coalition with the other groups living around the lake. Together, they defeated the Tepanec. Itzcoatl convinced the rulers of his neighbouring city-states, Texcoco and Tlacopan, to join him in a Triple Alliance to rule the Valley. The Alliance agreed that their armies would fight together. Their campaigns brought most of the city-states in the Valley of Mexico under their control.

Itzcoatl became the most capable leader in the Alliance. He understood the importance of maintaining positive ties with his allies. He decreed that defeated societies would have to pay **tribute** in the form of goods and labour. The tribute goods from conquered peoples would then be divided among the members of the Alliance. The conquered city-states stretched from mountains to coastal lowlands, from high cool climates to tropical heat; the Aztec rulers could depend on a variety of food and goods flowing to them. Because of the policies of Itzcoatl, the Aztec emperor was seen by the two other members of the Alliance as the ruler over the empire.

Among his own people, Itzcoatl established a hierarchical social system with distinct social classes. He improved the military by creating an elite group of warriors who came from nobility. Any warriors who brought back captives from battle received special honours.

Itzcoatl was the first of six Aztec emperors. He proved to be shrewd and intelligent and is referred to as “Founder of the Empire” in Aztec stories.



Emperor Itzcoatl, a Jaguar Warrior, created the Aztec Empire.

How Did the Aztec Emperors Become the Most Powerful Rulers in the Valley of Mexico?

While the Spanish were struggling to unify their kingdoms, the Aztec were establishing an empire. By the time the Spanish arrived in the early 1500s, there were few independent territories left in Meso-America that were not controlled by the Aztec.

The Aztec Rise to Power

Societies who could claim a direct lineage to the earlier civilization of the Toltec were the most respected and held the greatest power in the Valley of Mexico. Although the Aztec became skilled in dealing with their neighbours, they knew that they would never be respected unless the other Meso-American societies believed the Aztec were the noble descendants of the Toltec.

Aztec emperors increased their power by creating alliances with other powerful rulers, often through arranged marriages, a common practice of European rulers as well.

In 1376, Acamapichtli (*ah-cah-mah-PEECH-tlee*), the son of an Aztec nobleman and a Culhua princess, became the leader of the Aztec. The fact that Acamapichtli's mother was Culhua was very important to the Aztec because the Culhua were considered to be direct descendants of the Toltec. To reinforce Aztec ties to the Toltec, Acamapichtli chose the daughter of a Culhua royal as his wife. From this point, all Aztec emperors could claim they were direct descendants of the Toltec.

During the next 50 years, the Aztec gained power and respect in the Valley. Around 1428, the Aztec ruler, Itzcoatl, formed a Triple Alliance of the city-states of Texcoco, Tlacopan, and Tenochtitlan to fight the rival Tepanec. Over time, the Aztec became the most powerful partner of the Triple Alliance. Within four years, most of the region from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico was under the control of the Alliance except for the powerful Tlaxcalan, in an area southeast of Tenochtitlan, and some southern areas. By 1465, all these areas were finally conquered except for the Tlaxcalan. The Tlaxcalan republic was a federation of groups that included Tlaxcala itself, Huexotzinco (*way-sho-TSEEN-coh*), and Cholula. The Aztec remained in constant conflict with the Tlaxcalan republic.

Having a respected lineage often played a role in the respect a leader received. The Aztec claimed the Toltec as their ancestors.

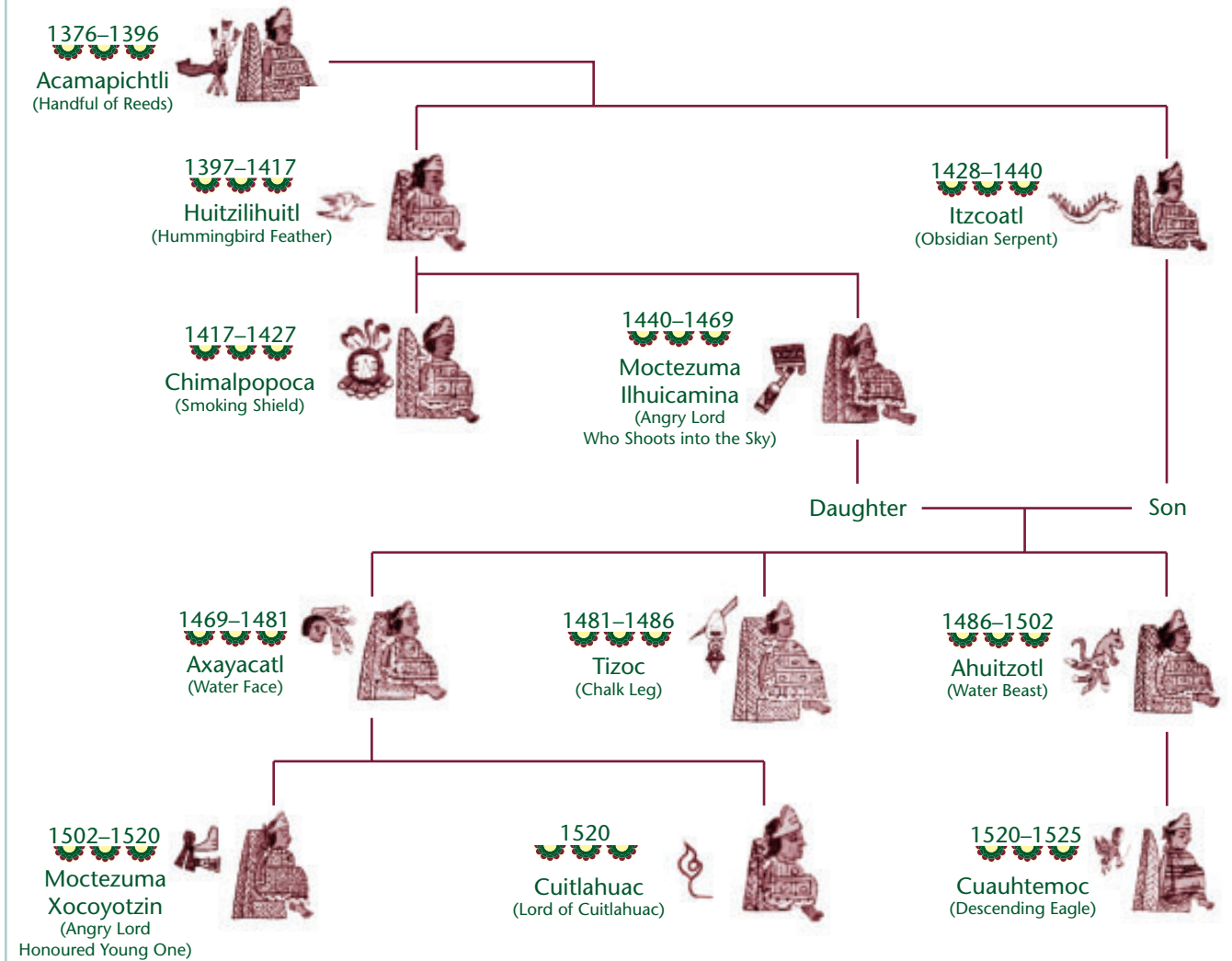
The emperor of Japan was considered to be a direct descendant of the gods and so was given the appropriate power to govern.

The Ainu of Japan trace their lineage back more than 10 000 years to the Jomon, the original inhabitants of Japan.



Acamapichtli

The Reigns of the Aztec Leaders from Acamapichtli to Cuauhtemoc



Acamapichtli was the son of an Aztec noble and a Culhua princess. Since the Culhua were descendants of the Toltec, the Aztec could now claim to be descended from the Toltec as well. Acamapichtli founded the dynasty of Aztec huey tlatoni (*way-tlah-toh-AH-nee*), great speakers, who ruled the Aztec Empire. (The Spanish used the word *emperor* to describe the Aztec leader.) The huey tlatoni stayed within the royal family founded by Acamapichtli, passing from father to son, or brother to brother, or grandfather to grandson, depending on who showed the most merit.

Conquering New Societies

Life in Aztec society developed around a culture of war. For the Aztec, the goals of battle were two-fold:

- to seek an honourable defeat for the enemy and then make them pay tribute and provide labour to the empire
- to gain soldiers for the human sacrifice to the god Huitzilopochtli

The Aztec developed an effective military strategy. They first conquered weaker societies around those that were stronger and more challenging. Then, they attacked the isolated altepetl.

When the Aztec defeated a city-state, they usually attacked the temples in the cities, took hostages, and negotiated tribute. They set up statues of their god Huitzilopochtli in the local temples, beside the local gods. The conquered altepetl were required to worship the Aztec god along with their own. Surprisingly, the Aztec did not leave a **garrison** behind to enforce the emperor's orders. If the orders were not obeyed, the emperor sent in imperial forces to brutally put down any disobedience. He often had the forces of neighbouring altepetls join the royal forces.

garrison: the troops assigned to a military post

I wonder ... did forcing neighbouring societies to fight alongside the Aztec prevent the creation of new alliances that could challenge the Aztec?



From the *Florentine Codex*

Top: Images of Eagle Knight and Jaguar Knight, the main divisions of Aztec warriors

Bottom: Ritual to honour the sun god

Punishing an Altepetl

The people of Oztoman (*ohs-TOH-mahn*) refused to pay tribute to the Aztec, so the army attacked, broke through the fortifications, burned the temple, and killed the people, sparing only the children. Then, they sent emissaries to Alahuiztlan (*ah-lah-WEES-tlahn*) asking for tribute, which the town refused to give, and the Aztec attacked and razed that city as well. All the adults were killed in Alahuiztlan and Oztoman, and more than 40 000 children were taken and distributed throughout the rest of the empire. The campaign itself encouraged submission by demonstrating that the fate of the conquered cities was partially in the hands of the vanquished; those who cooperated received more favourable treatment than those who did not.

The description here presents one perspective.

I wonder ... how would the Aztec have presented the information?

The Aztec maintained power with a strong military and their alliances with conquered city-states. Throughout the 15th century, the Aztec continued to build their empire by taking over new territories and suppressing rebellions. The empire eventually included over 50 city-states. The city-states along the borders of the empire had outposts to keep enemies from attacking.

When a city-state was defeated, its citizens were required to

- promise allegiance to the emperor
- pay tribute to him in either goods or services
- worship the god Huitzilopochtli

The Aztec did not try to reorganize the societies they defeated. The defeated ruler continued to carry out the local laws and government, and the people continued to follow their own customs and beliefs.

Wars of Flowers

At times when no formal wars were being fought, the Aztec and their allies often challenged the rulers of other regions to participate in battles referred to as the Wars of Flowers. These wars were opportunities for young warriors to train and improve their skills and to take captives for sacrifices. Although war was not formally declared, the warriors took the battles seriously and captives were taken by both sides.

What Political Structure Developed in the Aztec Empire?

The most important individuals governing the empire were the Aztec nobility, the pipiltin (*pee-PEEL-teen*). Among the pipiltin, the emperor was the highest-ranking noble and held the greatest power in the empire. The Chief of Internal Affairs was the closest advisor to the emperor and the second in command. The tlatoque (*tlah-TOH-kway*) ruled the major towns and cities within the empire. Tecutin (*tay-KOO-teen*) ruled smaller areas than the tlatoque.

The tlatoque and tecutin ensured that all the records of the altepetl were correct. They managed the marketplace as well as important resources such as gold and silver mines and **obsidian** quarries. They had authority over local legal matters and held the rank of general among the warriors. They were also members of the group of advisors to a council of Elders who would choose a successor after an emperor died.

The priests were important advisors to the emperor. They studied their religious calendar to determine which days would be lucky to engage in activities such as war and religious ceremonies.

obsidian: a dark natural glass formed by the cooling of molten lava, used to create razor-sharp knives

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. List the qualities of Itzcoatl that made him a desirable leader. Would these qualities be valuable to be an effective leader in Canada?
2. During the reign of Itzcoatl, warriors became an elite group in society. What does this illustrate about the worldview of the Aztec?
3. The Aztec believed they needed to be descended from the Toltec in order to gain the respect of neighbouring societies. Why did they believe this?
4. How did the Aztec change from a wandering tribe looked down upon by most of the people they encountered, to the most powerful society in the Valley of Mexico?
5. Life for the Aztec revolved around a culture of war. Their goal was to rule the Valley of Mexico. How might a culture based on war affect the worldview of people?
6. What were possible reasons for the Aztec to allow their conquered city-states to maintain their own societal norms and customs? Explain.

How Did the Spanish Monarchy Become So Powerful?

While the Aztec were establishing their empire, the Spanish were fighting the last 100 years of the Reconquista. In 1479, towards the end of the Reconquista, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella married. They wanted greater powers for the monarchy. During their reign, they increased the powers of the throne and decreased the powers of the Cortes (the Spanish parliament).

Rise to Power

When Ferdinand and Isabella took over the monarchy, they were determined to have the power to rule Spain as they wished. To do this, they

- centralized government under their control
- created a more efficient government bureaucracy
- imposed new taxes
- took control of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain
- began the Spanish Inquisition
- forbid any faith but Roman Catholicism

Reducing the Powers of the Aristocracy

The Cortes was established in the 13th century to keep the power of the monarchs under control. The Cortes controlled the national treasury, and the king or queen were required to get approval for all major expenditures. Over time, the members of the Cortes, made up of the aristocrats, became very powerful.

Ferdinand and Isabella

- reduced the power of the aristocracy by having men from humbler origins, not from the aristocracy, selected for the Cortes
- allowed nobles to participate in parliamentary proceedings, but not vote
- reorganized important financial and judicial institutions so the monarchy had more control
- centralized the powers of the government under a Council of State, a Council of Finance, and a Council of Justice

Although Ferdinand and Isabella reduced the powers of the aristocrats, they knew that they still needed their support. To compensate them for their loss of political power, Ferdinand and Isabella granted the aristocrats huge tracts of land and exempted them from paying taxes on these holdings. After the territories controlled by the Moors were conquered, they were divided among a small number of noble families loyal to the monarchs.

During this period, the merchant class in the cities became more successful, although they were not as powerful as the merchant class in many other parts of Europe, such as Italy or the Netherlands. Ferdinand and Isabella gained the support of the merchants and townspeople by making changes to financial institutions that helped them with their business activities and by promising them protection. After winning their support, Ferdinand and Isabella sent in their own representatives to govern cities and tax the residents. Local officials were directly responsible to the monarchy. In this way, the monarchs stopped the cities from becoming too independent and powerful. They also taxed merchants very heavily because the nobles were exempt from paying taxes.

Control of the Church

The Roman Catholic Church in Spain had been quite independent of royal authority and also had great influence over the people. Ferdinand and Isabella understood they had to have control over the Church if they wanted complete control in governing Spain. They knew that to control the Church, they needed to be able to place individuals of their own choosing in important Church positions. These choices had usually been made by the pope.

In 1486, Pope Innocent VIII gave Ferdinand and Isabella the right to choose whomever they wanted to fill Church positions. They were granted this power in Spain and later had the same power in their colonies. This power had seldom been given up by the Roman Catholic Church. In return, Ferdinand and Isabella agreed to set up the Spanish Inquisition.



Catholic Rulers Administering Justice, oil painting by Victor Manzano y Meiorada, 1860. Church courts could rule whether a person was faithful to the rules and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church.

Domestic Issues

The new monarchy was able to change many political, judicial, and economic institutions. However, many problems continued:

- Spain was still very much a hierarchical society. Life for the peasants changed very little. A very small percentage of the population continued to own most of the land.
- Landowners were still exempt from all taxes.
- The developing merchant class, which was not yet large, was given more power, but at the same time, was taxed very heavily. The merchants resented the fact that both the Church and nobility were exempt taxation. A very strong merchant class did not develop until recent times.
- The aristocrats believed they were far too superior to have to work. In fact, they looked down upon any manual labour.
- Castile and Aragon continued to function as two distinct kingdoms with different languages and cultures.

The Spanish Begin to Build an Empire

Although King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella still had to deal with domestic problems, the changes they instituted gave them greater authority and better resources to begin a policy of exploration and discovery. Before the voyages of Columbus, Spain's only colonial holdings were in the Canary Islands. In 1492, Columbus convinced the monarchs to support him in his explorations. This decision led to Spain becoming the most powerful and wealthy country in Europe in the 16th century.

By the middle of the 1500s, Spain controlled large areas of the Caribbean, the Americas, and parts of Asia and Africa.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. The Spanish monarchy reduced the powers of its citizens. When the powers of citizens are reduced, how might the worldview of their society be affected?
2. How might the worldviews of the aristocrats and the merchant class differ?
3. Research the roles and responsibilities of the king and queen of Spain today. List them in a graphic organizer. Indicate whether they have the same powers over the Spanish people as did Ferdinand and Isabella.

Same Time, Different Place

Other Empires, 1400s to 1500s

The Aztec ruled over a large empire. Other societies around the world, such as the Inca of Peru, the Ottomans of Turkey, and the Ming Dynasty of China, flourished and ruled large empires during this period.



Inca

In Peru, the Inca Empire stretched from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean and from Ecuador to Chile. The empire reached its peak around 1438 to 1532. The capital was Cuzco. Like Tenochtitlan, Cuzco had magnificent structures that included grand palaces and pyramidal temples. The city had its own water supply and sanitation system. While the Aztec used the codices to keep written records, the Inca kept records using a system of knotted cords. The Inca Empire ended in 1532 when Francisco Pizarro, another Spaniard, defeated the Inca armies.

Ottomans

The Ottoman Empire extended from Algeria to Arabia and from Egypt to Hungary. After recapturing the city of Constantinople during the time of the European crusades, the Ottomans rebuilt the city and made it the capital, Istanbul. The Islamic Ottoman culture was respected for its wonderful architecture and advanced learning. The golden age of the empire lasted approximately 200 years from the mid-1400s to the 1600s. The empire lasted into the early part of the 20th century and evolved into modern-day Turkey.

Ming Dynasty

The Ming Dynasty ruled China for almost 300 years (1368 to 1644). By 1368, China had been conquered and controlled by the Mongols for hundreds of years. The Chinese finally rebelled, led by the peasant Zhu Yuanzhang. They ousted the Mongols in 1368, establishing the Ming Dynasty. The new emperor took the name Ming Hong Wu. Under his reign, conditions for Chinese commoners improved. The capital of the Ming Dynasty was established in Beijing.

What Aspects of Worldviews Are Reflected in Creation Stories?

oral tradition: the passing of cultural knowledge, beliefs, and stories to the next generation through speaking rather than writing; notably used by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit societies of the Americas. The oral tradition was also the key method of passing on cultural knowledge in early Asian, European, African, and Australian societies.

The most accurate and detailed book of Aztec stories and poems is probably Friar Bernardino de Sahagun's *General History of the Things of New Spain*. Shortly after the Conquest, he had the Aztec use their own paintings and language to create an anthology of their literature. The Aztec stories in this collection are free from Christian influence, but not without similarities.

Most societies have creation or origin stories that explain the creation of the world and human beings. They often provide a way of understanding the religious and spiritual beliefs and customs of a specific society. Some stories may also explain natural phenomena or be used to examine the values and morals of a society. These stories were originally told through oral traditions of storytelling. They are often depicted through art and sculpture.

The Aztec believed the gods had created and destroyed the world four times. They believed that these four destructions were caused by the death of the sun. After the fourth destruction, the gods met at Teotihuacan to create the fifth world. The Aztec believed they were living in this fifth world, known as the fifth sun, and that it was their duty to keep the sun alive to prevent the destruction of the Earth and its people.

Aztec Creation Stories

How Earth Was Created

The creation stories about the fifth sun have many variations, as is the case with stories in the **oral tradition**.

One variation tells of the ancient belief that the world was a flat disc surrounded by water. Above the water were thirteen layers of heaven; below the water were nine layers of underworld. The Earth was divided into four quarters: north, east, south, and west. Each quarter was associated with four creator gods from the first four worlds. Gods lived within the layers and could enter Earth in a variety of forms.

The leading god, Ometeotl (*oh-may-TAY-oh-tl*), had four sons. The two most important sons were Quetzalcoatl, a gentle god who was a friend of humans, and Tezcatlipoca, an all-powerful being who was god of darkness and sorcery. After the fourth destruction, the sky had fallen onto the Earth and Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca had to separate them. Before they could separate the Earth and sky, the earth goddess covered herself with a snapping monster. The two brothers, according to the ancient stories, then transformed themselves into great serpents, grabbed the earth monster at both ends, and broke her in half. They then raised half the monster's body to become the heavens, thus separating the heavens from Earth.

After the separation of Earth and heaven, two minor gods were chosen to be the sun and the moon. These gods were asked to jump into a fiery blaze. One god faltered and took several attempts before jumping into the fire. The other one jumped into the blaze on his first try; he was the one chosen to become the sun. The other god became the moon. The sun, however, was unable to move across the skies. More gods then sacrificed themselves by throwing themselves into the fire. They were reborn in the sky to help the sun make its daily journey.

How Humans Were Created

One story tells of the Aztec belief that the bones of their ancestors and the blood of the gods made the first humans in the fifth world. The god Quetzalcoatl went to the underworld to gather the bones of humans of past generations who had lived in the first four worlds. As he fled the god of the underworld, returning to the surface, Quetzalcoatl fell and dropped the bones. They scattered and broke into different-sized pieces. He sprinkled the pieces with his blood and they turned into people. Because the bones were all different sizes, the humans he created were of different sizes.



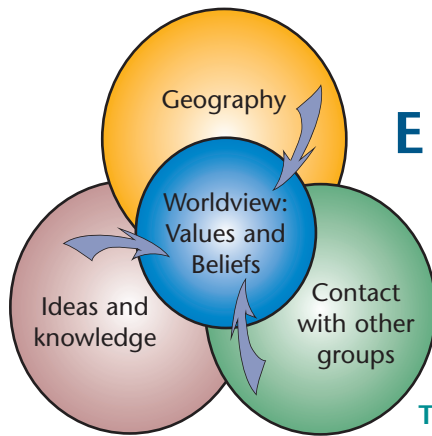
The Aztec god of life and death, Quetzalcoatl, from the *Florentine Codex*

By studying the traditional stories of cultures such as the Aztec, we can learn about their beliefs and gain understanding of the reasons for their behaviour. Aztec stories reinforce their beliefs that there must be some form of sacrifice in order for the sun to shine and the world to exist and remain in balance. This belief became an important part of their worldview and led them to perform human sacrifices. They believed the blood of humans was the most precious offering they could give to their gods. The Aztec believed the gods would be satisfied with sacrifices made in their honour and would be nourished by the blood of those sacrificed. The Aztec considered warriors who were sacrificed to the gods to be great heroes. Gods and humans worked together to maintain the balance of the universe of the fifth sun.

Aztec warriors were expected to bring back captives so they could be sacrificed to the gods. Killing the enemy was not the goal in battle. The most honoured soldiers were those who captured four or more of the enemy.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

1. In a group, discuss the following questions:
 - a. What creation stories do you know?
 - b. Choose one or two of these stories. What might these creation stories say about the important cultural or religious beliefs of the societies?
2. How do the Aztec creation stories communicate a worldview in which human sacrifice was a very important practice?



End-of-Chapter

Conclusion

The worldviews of the Aztec and the Spanish were influenced by their geographical location, contact with other societies, and the ideas and knowledge of their time.

The Aztec

- overcame two centuries of struggle and hardship during their long migration
- completed a long, difficult migration and settled on an island in the middle of a lake
- built one of the most beautiful cities in Meso-America in spite of the limitations of their environment
- used the ideas and knowledge of other societies to develop their own culture and beliefs
- evolved from a small group of semi-nomads to the most powerful society in the Valley of Mexico
- relied on priests for advice and direction
- believed in many gods
- unified their kingdom through the Triple Alliance
- became the most powerful city-state in Meso-America by 1500

The Spanish

- lived through and overcame centuries of invasion and colonization on the Iberian Peninsula
- fought the wars of the Reconquista for over 700 years
- incorporated the legacy of the Moors into their own culture
- laid the foundation for a united kingdom with the marriage of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon
- became one of the most powerful nations in Europe by 1500
- supported explorations to the New World
- believed in one god
- relied on their priests for advice

The new monarchs gained control over the country's political institutions and led Spain to become the most powerful country in the world. Spain's geographical location became an incentive for exploration, looking westward for its expansion.

Review and Synthesize

1. Make a timeline that shows the histories of both the Aztec and the Spanish. Place key events of Aztec civilization along the top of the timeline and key events of the Spanish civilization along the bottom of the timeline. Highlight the events that involved contact with other societies.
2. Both the Aztec and the Spanish were powerful societies. Describe the nature and extent of the power that each had. Predict what would happen when they came into contact with each other.
3. Make two maps: one of Spain and one of the Aztec Empire. On each, indicate the key geographic features that had an impact on their worldviews.

Inquiry

4. Find a creation story of another society and prepare to tell it orally to your group. Think about where to find creation stories — in library resources, on the Internet, from Elders in your community, and other places. When you have listened to all of the stories told by the members of your group, discuss how they are similar.

SKILLS CENTRE

Turn to **How to Organize Historical Events** in the Skills Centre to review different ways to make a timeline.

Show What You Know

5. Describe how geography influenced the worldviews of the Aztec and the Spanish. What did the two societies have in common? What was different?
6. Both the Aztec and the Spanish were influenced by other societies. Identify the most influential societies that each encountered and explain what effect each had.
7. Create a chart or use a graphic organizer to show the ways in which the worldviews of the Spanish and the Aztec were similar.

Closure

8. **Share:** Review the events posted on the bulletin board timelines, noting what was happening to the Aztec and the Spanish at certain points. Conduct a discussion or an informal debate to predict what will happen when the two groups meet.
9. **Discuss:** Are there any modern examples of societies that believe in a culture of war? What would a society be like if it believed in a culture of peace?
10. **Reflect:** Spend a few minutes in personal reflection. Think about the variety of cultures that have influenced your worldview. Both the Aztec and the Spanish were influenced by several other cultures over time. Perhaps you are one of the Canadians who also has more than one culture in your family background. Perhaps you live in a community with many new immigrants from different cultures. What have you learned from people of different cultures who you have met in your lifetime?