MESOAMERICA CALLING!

A FULLY DEVELOPED INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT
FOR GRADES 5 & 7

CREATED AND DEVELOPED FOR USE WITH
FUTUREKI DS
CLASSROOM CURRENTS LANGUAGE ARTS
This project was created for FUTUREKIDS, Inc. by TechKNOW Associates Corporation: 26 Lori Street, Monroe Township, NJ 08831, U.S.A. 1-800-860-0773
www.techKNOWassociates.com

Permission is hereby granted to educators to make copies of portions or all the content of this project, provided that the purposes of the copying are educational and entirely noncommercial.
Once proud and mighty, a conquering hand,
Taming the valleys and ruling the land—
Spreading and building, you grasped hold of life,
Burning and killing, with warrior’s knife—
You long ago vanished, but left open a door,
For us to come seek you, to learn and explore!

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Mesoamerica Calling! project is a simulation in which your students are invited by the editors of an anthropology magazine to become cultural anthropologists as they learn first-hand about pre-Columbian indigenous cultures. Your students will “experience” the history, culture, and geography of Mesoamerica through the use of the Internet, web-based primary source materials, and other authentic artifacts, as they create products that demonstrate their understanding and creativity.

Mesoamerica Calling! is driven by the New York City and New York State content and performance standards of several disciplines with a focus on the New York State Social Studies learning standards\(^1\). The project is designed to take advantage of the inherently curious nature of middle school learners by inviting them to use technology and other media to learn about the Aztec, Maya, Olmec, Toltec, and Zapotec cultures of Mexico and Guatemala. Your class will use the FUTUREKIDS Classroom Currents Language Arts materials to master the language, literacy, and technology skills necessary to complete this project.

The structure of the project encourages students to direct their own learning. It begins with a comprehensive introduction that assesses and augments their background knowledge, followed by two distinct but interrelated guided learning phases:

- **Phase One: Encountering Mesoamerican Cultures:** Students will work cooperatively to conduct in-depth research on five Mesoamerican cultures. They will create graphic organizers, maps, and multimedia presentations to exhibit their findings.

- **Phase Two: Exploring Mesoamerican Art and Architecture:** Students will conduct research on the art and architecture produced by Mesoamerican cultures. Each cooperative group will create a virtual tour of an archeological site that includes references to art and other artifacts based on archeological evidence.

The culminating event will be an opportunity for students to exhibit their work. They will present what they have learned and display their related projects to invited guests.

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\(^1\) This project directly addresses 5th and 7th grade Social Studies curriculum. Information on how to adapt this project to address language arts curriculum in grades 6 and 8 can be found in the Appendix.
INTEGRATING FUTUREKIDS

The study of social studies requires students to obtain a wide vocabulary and to become skillful in manipulating language. The concepts and skills used in the project are addressed through a variety of lessons and activities contained in the FUTUREKIDS Classroom Currents Language Arts series. The series is organized by grade level, with different lessons for each level. You will use the activities from the kit for your grade level to prepare your students for the tasks in this project.

You do not have to finish the entire series in order to start this project. It is recommended that students complete at least 6 lessons prior to beginning the project. You may use the following recommendations (or choose your own combination of lessons) to provide students with a basic overview of using the software to enhance reading and writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yellow (Gr. 5)</th>
<th>Blue (Gr. 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoint and Web Browser</td>
<td>Word and Publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessives</td>
<td>Writing with Commas and Clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 12</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word and Publisher</td>
<td>Word and FrontPage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing and Proofreading</td>
<td>Using Colons and Semicolons in Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Word and Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to Others’ Writing</td>
<td>Synonyms and Subtle Shades of Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 18</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FrontPage and Web Browser</td>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character and Point of View</td>
<td>Speaking for a Purpose/Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 20</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 13</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoint and Excel</td>
<td>Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and Effect</td>
<td>Writing: Evaluating Peer Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 23</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson 14</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher and Web Browser</td>
<td>Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Literature</td>
<td>Editing and Proofreading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, each kit includes lessons that can be adapted and incorporated directly into the project. These lessons provide students with step-by-step instructions to help them accomplish the “real-world” tasks for this project. Throughout this project you will be prompted to adapt and apply these lessons in a way that complements the timing and flow of the project.

REQUIRED MATERIALS AND SOFTWARE

- FUTUREKIDS Classroom Currents Language Arts, Yellow or Blue Level
- Microsoft Office (including Word, PowerPoint, Excel, FrontPage, Publisher, Access)
- A web browser, such as Internet Explorer or Netscape
- Graphic organizer software, such as Inspiration (optional)
This project addresses the following New York City, New York State, and National performance and content standards:

**New York State Social Studies Standards**

- **Fifth Grade:** US, Canadian, Latin American Studies
- **Seventh Grade:** History and the Social Sciences; Geographic Factors Influence Cultures

Students will...
- Locate, analyze, and evaluate information from different types of primary and secondary sources.
- Differentiate relevant from irrelevant information and understand the purpose for which information is to be used.
- Make connections among various sources of information and ideas.
- Produce informational writing that shows an understanding of social studies content.
- Organize and present information orally, giving credit to sources of information.
- Participate in cooperative planning and take responsibility for completing individual and group assignments.

**New York City English Language Arts Standards**

Students will...
- Show evidence of understanding their reading in both writing and classroom discussion.
- Use computer software to support reading and use on-line and electronic databases.
- Produce an informational piece of writing.
- Identify information important enough for note taking.
- Listen to an oral presentation and analyze what the speaker did to persuade the audience.
- Take turns speaking; respond to each other’s questions and comments, and work together to come up with group decisions and ideas.
- Share data, facts, and ideas and back them up with sources and explanations to persuade a listener.
- Use grammar and conventions correctly.

**National Geography Standards:**

Students will...
- Learn and demonstrate how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information.
- Learn how culture and experience influence people’s perception of places and regions.
- Learn about the characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on earth’s surface.
- Learn how the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of earth’s surface.
- Learn how to apply geography to interpret the past.

**National Art Standards**

Students will...
- Understand and apply media, techniques, and processes.
- Understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.
- Reflect upon and assess the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.
BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A project of this scope and magnitude takes planning. Here are some things to consider before you begin:

Do I Have To Do All of This?
The project plan is designed to meet the needs of a variety of classroom environments and curriculums. However, it may be too extensive for a single class to complete. Read through the whole plan and select the activities that are most appropriate for your class. Make sure you have all the materials you need before beginning any part of the project. Also, feel free to change and adapt any aspect of the project to suit the interests and needs of your students.

Although the phases of the project are designed to work together, each phase meets specific content objectives. You may consider doing only one phase, especially if this is the first time you are engaging in a project such as this.

Should Cooperative Learning Experiences Be Used With This Project?
Yes! Cooperative learning is an integral component of this project. If you haven’t used cooperative learning before, you will want to ease into it. For tips about how to organize a cooperative learning experience, visit http://www.sedl.org/scimath/compass/v01n02/welcome.html

How Long Will This Project Take?
The estimated time frame for completing the entire project is eight to ten weeks. However, there are many variables (such as the number of computers you have and the parts of the project that you decide to complete) that may affect the actual time it will take your class to complete the project.

Each section includes a suggested time frame, but you may have to adjust this for your students’ needs. Once you begin this project, it is important to set up a time frame and stick with it. Planning when to have your culminating activity and giving students a real deadline will help keep them focused throughout this project.

Can More Than One Class Participate In The Project?
Yes! This project encourages student creativity: no two finished projects will be the same. Including several classes will enrich your culminating activity. By working with other teachers or librarians, this can be a school-wide project. Each class/grade can participate at its own level.

For the culminating activity, each class can give a short presentation of their best work. To keep the event to a reasonable length, limit each class to a specific amount of time for presentation. Set up a gallery of projects to make sure all students’ work is seen and appreciated by visitors.
How Do I Structure An Interdisciplinary Project?

Experts agree that an interdisciplinary approach to learning can give students a richer understanding and increase their interest in a topic, as well as provide a context for learning. One of the better ways to do this is to have several teachers of different content areas collaborate in implementing this project.

There are two ways to structure collaborative teaching:

- One teacher coordinates the project and employs other teachers as resources. (The science teacher helps with the project’s science-related activities; the social studies teacher helps with geography and map making, etc.)
- Divide the project ahead of time amongst several teachers according to content.

One teacher should take the responsibility of coordinating the project. No matter how you structure the project, collaboration takes careful planning and communication. Use email or arrange common planning time to organize each phase of the project.

Even if collaborative teaching is not an appropriate choice for your school, you can still do this project. Start by determining the goals and objectives that you want to address. Then establish which aspects of the project will help you meet those learning goals. If you only have one period a day with students, time may be an important factor. Students may be able to complete part of the project outside of class time.

How Many Computers Do I Need?

This project is designed to work in a wide variety of school settings. You can complete this project whether you have one computer in the classroom, several computers in the classroom, access to a computer lab or media center, or laptop computers. Many of the activities present options for working without a computer. There are several things that you must do before your students can use the computer.

You should:

- Arrange computer(s) and desks (if possible) to accommodate group work.
- Establish rules and procedures for using the computers and Internet.
- Set up a time schedule for students so they know what they’re doing and when it is due.
- Demonstrate each program or activity on the computer to the whole class.
- Limit students to one activity at a time.

Students should be prepared before going to the computer. You can assign one or two “computer savvy” students to help other students with simple tasks, like Internet searches or saving documents.

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For more information on the benefits of interdisciplinary instruction, visit: [http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/8/c016.html](http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/8/c016.html). See also Jensen, E. *Teaching With The Brain In Mind*
The following is a checklist of things that you should complete before introducing this project to your students:

- Any software students will need must be pre-installed into each computer. Students should have access to basic tool software, such as word processing and presentation software.
- Bookmark any articles or other links students will be using.
- Make sure necessary plug-ins (such as Shockwave, RealPlayer, and QuickTime) are loaded and working.
- Be sure to have all reading and project handout materials copied and available for your students ahead of time.
- Prepare for what to do if the technology doesn’t work. If the printer breaks, or your connection to the Internet goes down, you should have activities ready as substitutes.

What Planning Should I Do With My Students?
Be sure to review the rubrics and any other assessments you will be using ahead of time, so students know what is expected of them. This project encourages students to make choices among activities. Allow students to be creative in developing their finished products. This will give them a stronger sense of ownership and motivation.

How Will Students Benefit From Engaging In This Project?
Project-based learning, as exemplified by the activities suggested here, has many advantages. It appeals to a variety of learning styles, helps to motivate students, and promotes skill building by providing hands-on, real-time experiences.

Each phase of the project includes motivating and engaging tasks. As students complete each section, they are developing skills that will enable them to express themselves and communicate their ideas more effectively. Regardless of each child’s individual abilities, everyone will learn and feel that their contribution is important and respected.

Best of all, project-based learning is fun for students and exciting for teachers!
INTRODUCTION:
MEETING THE MESOAMERICANS

Estimated Time Frame: 2 Weeks

You can’t assume that your students will have the necessary prior knowledge to complete this project successfully. The activities in this introduction will provide them with a variety of opportunities to expand their vocabulary, their content knowledge, and their technology skills. You do not have to complete every activity.

Begin your preparation by reviewing the projects goals and activities. Read the project from cover to cover and become familiar with all of its features. Decide which activities will best suit the needs of your students. Visit and bookmark the recommended web sites\(^3\) and become familiar with the cultures about which your students will be learning.

Next, prepare your room. Visit web sites that feature graphics depicting Mesoamerican art and architecture. Print these out and place them in a section of your room that is dedicated to displaying work from the project. You can use a caption to describe the graphic, or you may wish to leave the caption off and allow your students to add the labels themselves as they increase their knowledge of Mesoamerican culture.

Introducing The Project

Begin a discussion with your students about the project and all it entails. Introduce the word Mesoamerica to your students. Discuss meso and explain that it means “middle.” Use a map to show your students where Mesoamerica is located, and relate this geography back to the term meso. Explain the historical scope and focus and the project’s activities and requirements. Ask students to explain what they are being asked to do to ensure their understanding. You may wish to make handouts for the class to read and keep.

Next, divide your class into five cooperative groups. Each student should assume a role within the group so as to ensure that all of the group’s responsibilities are equitably distributed. Possible roles include leader, recorder, reporter, researcher, proofreader, and organizer. You may wish to assign roles at first and then allow groups to change these as conditions develop.

\(^3\) A list of web sites can be found in the Appendix. Additional web links can be found at http://www.techKNOWassociates.com/mesoamerica/
Creating A Project Notebook

Have your students keep a project notebook just for work on this project. Encourage students to keep all their notes, ideas, research, and sketches in this notebook. In addition, students should reserve separate sections of the notebook for self-reflection and vocabulary:

- **Self-reflection:** Have students reflect on what they have learned after each class session. Asking your students to think about their learning is an excellent way of getting them to realize just how much they have learned and to think about what else they would like to know.
- **Vocabulary:** Tell your students that it is their responsibility to add at least three new words to their notebook each week, and that they are to define the word and use it in a sentence of their own. Reserve time each week to review these entries. Make sure that students can use the words correctly and in varied contexts of their own creation.

Introduction to Anthropology

The **Mesoamerica Calling** project asks your students to learn about the modern descendents of ancient cultures from the perspective of a cultural anthropologist. With this in mind, it is important to give your students the necessary preparation for engaging in an anthropological study. Begin these preparations by engaging your class in a discussion about the word **anthropology**.

Tell your students about cultural anthropology and explain how anthropologists study cultures. Offer the following suggestions for studying a culture “as an anthropologist:”

- Learn about the culture’s history, art, and architecture
- Discover if they are still a distinct culture
- Learn the history and classifications of the culture’s language
- Learn to read and to draw maps
- Take comprehensive, well-written notes
- Gather large amounts of graphics and other artifacts
You can visit the following web sites to gain valuable perspectives into teaching your students about anthropology:

- http://www.sil.si.edu/SILPublications/Anthropology-K12/
- http://anthap.oakland.edu/napafaq.htm
- http://www.aaanet.org/careersbroch.htm

Next, ask students to research the profession of anthropology. Ask them to use a variety of Internet and print resources to answer the following questions:

- What is an anthropologist?
- What types of jobs are available for an anthropologist?
- What training and education is required to become an anthropologist?

Students should use a variety of resources in their research. In addition to the Internet, research should include various print resources, such as books, encyclopedias and other reference books, as well as magazine and newspaper articles. Students should consult various sources to verify their facts.

This is also a good opportunity to begin in a discussion about properly citing work and plagiarism. Be sure that your students know the difference between the two and always give credit to others’ work.

**Post-session activities**

Have students add any new vocabulary to their project notebooks. Ask them to write what they have learned in the Self-reflection section of their project notebooks. You may want to prompt students with the following questions:

* What does an anthropologist do?
* Why is it important to study cultures from the past?

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4 Additional web sites are available in the Appendix.
Creating Archeological Site Maps

Since your students will be conducting “tours” of archeological sites later in the project, it is important for them to become familiar with the physical and political geography of Mexico and Guatemala. Distribute the Map of Mexico and Guatemala⁵ to each group. Review this and ask your students to show you where Mexico and Guatemala are located on the map. Tell your students that they must use the Internet to label this map. Maps should include the following information:

- A compass rose pointing north with the other cardinal directions noted.
- A legend indicating each symbol used on the map.
- The name of each modern estado (Mexico) or departamento (Guatemala)
- The name and location of major modern cities.
- Important geographic features (such as mountains, rivers, lakes, etc.)

When your students have finished completing their maps, review the work as a class. As the project progresses, students will add additional information to these maps.

Extension Activity: Have each group to create a large-scale reproduction of one Mexican state or Guatemalan department. Large-scale maps should include all of the above features except the compass rose.

Have groups continue to create additional sections of the map to encompass all the Mexican states and Guatemalan departments. Be sure that each group uses the same scale for its maps, so that the individual pieces can be put together into a large wall-sized map.

Post-session activities

Have students add any new vocabulary to their project notebooks. Ask them to write what they have learned in the Self-reflection section of their project notebooks. You may want to prompt students with the following questions:

- What are some of the features of a political map? Explain the purpose of each of these features.
- Why is it important for an anthropologist to have an understanding of the geographic areas of the cultures they are studying?

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⁵ This handout can be found in the Appendix.
**PHASE ONE:**
**ENCOUNTERING MESOAmerican CULTURES**

*Estimated Timeframe: 3 Weeks*

Begin with a review of the work that your students have done thus far. Review their vocabulary taxonomies and ask them to demonstrate their understanding. Ask students to review their reflective journal entries and to think about what they've learned up to this point.

*Mesoamerica Calling!* creates an authentic learning experience by simulating a “real-world” experience. Part of motivating your students to become involved in this project centers on how you introduce and present it. Using official-looking memos and letters can make the simulation seem more real, engaging students in the entire learning process. (*Make sure your students understand this is only a simulation!*)

Distribute the *Project Introduction Letter* included in the Appendix. This letter provides a general context for the project. It invites your class to participate in creating an educational program specifically written by and for middle school students. Ask students to read the letter individually and then read it together as a class. Provide time for students to ask questions and to make sure your students understand what they are being asked to do.

**Introducing Mesoamerican Cultures**

Write the following four category headings on the board: *Cultures, Ancient Cities, Modern Locations,* and *Artifacts.* Ask each cooperative group to spend a few minutes discussing these words and to come up with a definition for each word. Ask students to surmise what types of words would belong in each category.

Next, provide students with the following list of words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aztec</th>
<th>México City</th>
<th>Tenochtitlán</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td>Monte Albán</td>
<td>Textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chacmool</td>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>Tikal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Petén, Guatemala</td>
<td>Olmec</td>
<td>Toltec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>Pyramids</td>
<td>Tula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Venta</td>
<td>Stone Heads</td>
<td>Veracruz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayan</td>
<td>Tabasco</td>
<td>Zapotec</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tell your students that these are words that they will be seeing very often and that the words all have to do with Mesoamerican peoples. Ask each cooperative group to arrange the words into the four categories on the board. Give your class plenty of time to work.

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6 If you are changing or adapting the project, you may need to change or adapt some of the letters to suit your needs. You should plan this out carefully ahead of time.

7 or “Mexica”
As they are working, circulate among your students and ask why they are placing the words where they are and what logic – if any – went into this decision. Don’t tell students if they are right or wrong; this will come a bit later. Encourage all reasonable hypotheses and guesses.

When the students have finished working, ask each group to discuss its responses with the class. Encourage other group members to ask questions of those who are speaking. You may wish to use a graphic organizer to list the ideas, and then to compare and contrast each group’s work. Don’t tell your students if their groups and words are correct or not; they will discover that for themselves.

Distribute the *Mesoamerican Backgrounder*. Ask students to read it individually and then read it together as a class. Provide time for students to ask questions and to make sure everyone understands the reading. Then, have each group review its responses from the previous activity and make changes as appropriate. Have each group share its findings with the class. Their final categories should read as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultures</th>
<th>Ancient Cities</th>
<th>Modern Locations</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olmec</td>
<td>La Venta</td>
<td>Veracruz/Tabasco</td>
<td>Stone Heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zapotec</td>
<td>Monte Albán</td>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>Textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayan</td>
<td>Tikal</td>
<td>El Petén, Guatemala</td>
<td>Calendar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toltec</td>
<td>Tula</td>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>Chacmool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aztec</td>
<td>Tenochtitlán</td>
<td>México City</td>
<td>Pyramids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Yellow Level, Lesson 2**

**Roots and Prefixes**
- Create a spreadsheet

**Blue Level, Lesson 3**

**Vocabulary Analysis**
- Create a database

**How to adapt it:**
Use this lesson to help students develop their vocabulary skills. Have students find 10 words on the *Mesoamerican Backgrounder* handout that contain common roots and prefixes. Have students break down the words into their roots and prefixes, according to the example in the lesson.

**Building the project:**

After completing this lesson, have each group create a new *Microsoft Excel* spreadsheet to keep track of their new vocabulary. The new spreadsheet should have the following headings: *Word, Meaning, Category, and Sentence*. Each group should add 4 new words to its spreadsheet each week.

After completing this lesson, have each group create a new *Microsoft Access* database to keep track of their new vocabulary. The new form should have the following fields: *Word, Meaning, Category, and Sentence*. Each group should add 4 new words to its database each week.
Post-session activities
Have students add any new vocabulary to their project notebooks. Using the Internet and other resources, students should find the locations of each of the modern and ancient cities from the chart and add them to their maps.

Ask students to write what they have learned in the Self-reflection section of their project notebooks. Part of the job of an anthropologist is to ask questions about cultures. Have your students write one or two questions they would like answered about each culture.

Creating a Cultural Time Line
Using the information from the Mesoamerican Backgrounder, have students make note of the approximate dates that each culture flourished. Ask each group to create a time line of Mesoamerican cultures. Ask students to place the cultures and the approximate dates that they flourished in chronological order. Their time lines should look similar to this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mesoamerican Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olmec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200 BCE - 400 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 BCE - 1550 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zapotec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 BCE - 1300 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toltec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950 CE - 1200 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aztec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400 CE - 1521 CE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ask your students to answer the following questions:

* Which cultures existed simultaneously and which cultures could not have met?
* Which cultures continue to exist as distinct cultures? Which have vanished?
* What were the major accomplishments or achievements of each culture?

BLUE LEVEL, LESSON 17
Writing Your Own Story
- Create a web page

Each cooperative group should research important events in the history of one of the cultures. They can adapt the template from this lesson to create a web page that chronicles the period in which the culture flourished.

Have a group of students create a “home page” that links to each of the individual cultural timelines.

Extension Activity: Have each group create a time line that chronicles one of the Mesoamerican cultures. Then, ask them to choose another culture (such as Chinese or Roman) and to mark events that were occurring in that culture on the same time line. When the time lines are complete, ask the groups to create a graphic organizer in which they compare and contrast the two cultures.
Presenting Mesoamerican Cultures

Ask each cooperative group to choose one of the following cultures: Olmec, Zapotec, Maya, Toltec, or Aztec. Each group should choose a different culture.

Remind your students that they are cultural anthropologists and will conduct an in-depth analysis of one of the cultures they encountered in the introduction. Tell them that the research they will conduct from this point forward will be directly related to the products they’re creating for the educational program they are developing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YELLOW LEVEL, LESSON 15</th>
<th>BLUE LEVEL, LESSON 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing with Information</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ranking Internet Resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conducting research on the Internet</td>
<td>• Conducting research on the Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to adapt it:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students should work with their cooperative groups to find 5 web sites that provide information about the culture they have chosen.</td>
<td>Students should work with their cooperative groups to conduct keyword searches. Each group should find at least three web sites that provide information about the culture they are researching and that have 4 or better rating. Students should understand that they might need to look at many web sites to find three that meet this criterion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building the project:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After completing this lesson, students should bookmark the two or three web sites with the highest rating to conduct their research.</td>
<td>After complete this lesson, students should bookmark the web sites with a 4 or better rating to conduct their research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conducting Guided Research

Distribute the Mesoamerican Cultures Research Guide to each student and a copy of the appropriate web sites to each group. Students will use the Internet to research the culture they are studying and to complete the information on the research guide. Explain to your class that this activity is a cooperative effort and that each group member should be responsible for a part of the research indicated on the guide. Each group will submit one completed guide.

As your students work, circulate among them and offer them guidance when they need it. Try not to answer their questions directly; rather, help them to clarify their ideas and offer them guidance toward finding sources that will empower them to answer their own questions. When each group is finished, they must present their research findings to rest of the class. Make sure each student should present one part of the research.

Each group will create a multimedia presentation demonstrating the culture they researched. In addition, they will create a graphic representation of their culture. Allow students to choose from a variety of graphic formats, such as a hand-drawn or computer-drawn picture, a diagram, a model, a sculpture, or a diorama.

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8 A list of web sites can be found in the Appendix. For a more comprehensive list of web sites, visit [http://www.techKNOWassociates.com/mesoamerica/](http://www.techKNOWassociates.com/mesoamerica/)
Finally, each group will present its research and graphic representation to the rest of the class. Provide time for other students to ask questions of each presenting group.

**Extension Activity:** Were the Olmecs indigenous peoples or travelers from another land? Controversy swirls around the origins of the Olmec culture. Some scholars claim that the Olmec originated in Africa; others say that they are indigenous to Mexico. Encourage your students to learn more about the debate and then to take a position based on their research findings. Have them write a news article supporting their opinion.

**Post-session activities**

Have students add any new vocabulary to their project notebooks. Ask them to write what they have learned in the *Self-reflection* section of their project notebooks. You may want to prompt students with the following questions:

- What are some of the most significant achievements of the culture you studied?
- What was daily life like for the people of the culture you studied?
- What are some of the ways anthropologists learned about these past cultures? What evidence is used to support conclusions about these cultures?

**Literary Connections** *(An Optional Activity)*

All cultures have stories. They have myths that explain how the world was created and how creatures and objects came into being. They have legends about people, places, and events from the past. They have purely fictional folktales that provide a symbolic way of presenting how human beings cope with the world in which they live. Myths, legends, and folktales can reveal much about the way a particular culture views the world.
Students will read a myth, legend, or folktale from one of the five cultures. Students can work independently, with a partner, or in small groups of 3 to 4 students to retell the story they read to the class. They may retell the story in any format such as a multimedia presentation, a skit, a puppet show, or other creative approach. For a list of resources for finding Mesoamerican myths, legends, and folktales, see the Appendix.

Next, have students work cooperatively to create a database or spreadsheet of Mesoamerican myths, legends, and folktales. The database or spreadsheet should include the following fields or headings: the title of the story, the author or translator, the illustrator, the genre (myth, legend, or folktale), a brief synopsis, a rating or recommendation, and a resource for finding the legend (such as a website, publisher, etc). You can use the example below as a model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Genre:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author:</strong></td>
<td>Myth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(or translator):</em></td>
<td>Legend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illustrator:</strong></td>
<td>Folktale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synopsis:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rating:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resource:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Blue Level, Lesson 27

**Comparing Stories from Different Cultures**
- Create a PowerPoint presentation
- Pair two students who read stories from different cultures. Have students complete the steps of the activity comparing the based upon these stories.
- Students can save their presentations as a website from the File menu. Have students post their finished presentations on the Internet.  

### Post-session activities

Have students to add any new vocabulary to their project notebooks. Ask them to write what they have learned in the Self-reflection section of their project notebooks.

You may want to prompt students with the following questions:

- What is the difference between a myth, a legend, and a folktale?
- What do anthropologists learn about a culture by studying its stories?
- How are the stories from the Mesoamerican cultures similar to stories from your own culture? How are they different?

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9 Students can adapt the template they used with the vocabulary activity earlier. (Yellow level, Lesson 2; Blue level, Lesson 3)

10 Know the standards and policies for posting student work on the Internet.
TRANSITION TO PHASE TWO: WEAVING MODERN CONNECTIONS

Distribute the Modern Connections Letter included in the Appendix. This letter asks students to explore the modern existence of two cultures, the Mayans and the Zapotecs. Although both of these cultures have significantly faded, both still exist as distinct cultures today.

Have your students find where the Mayans and Zapotecs live today and add these locations to their maps of Mexico and Guatemala. Compare the locations of the modern Mayans and Zapotecs with the ancient cultures studied in the previous activity. If these cultures have moved, ask students to discuss why they think this might have occurred.

The letter asks students to research five categories of information about each of the cultures and to create a newsletter about their findings. Each group will choose a different area on which to focus and research that category for both the Mayan and the Zapotec cultures:

- Written and oral language (including the origins and families)
- Occupations
- Arts and Crafts
- Foods
- Customs and traditions

Students may work individually or with a partner to write one news article, related to their research category, to contribute to the class publication. Some articles may be about the Mayans, others about the Zapotecs, and others comparing aspects of the two distinct cultures. Encourage students to use what they learned about ancient Mesoamerican cultures in their articles as well.

Teaching Tip: Newsletters call for students to become “reporters” and to write news stories. Before you ask your students to begin writing, you should introduce them to the skills related to news writing. Ask your students to visit these web sites for activities that will give them experience in news writing:
**Post-session activities**

Have students add any new vocabulary to their project notebooks. Ask students to write what they have learned in the *Self-reflection* section of their project notebooks. You may want to prompt students with the following questions:

* Why do you think the Mayans and the Zapotecs were able to maintain their distinct cultural heritage when other cultures have completely vanished?
* How are the modern Mayans and Zapotecs similar to their Pre-Columbian ancestors? How are they different?
* What can an anthropologist learn about an ancient culture from studying a modern culture?
PHASE TWO: 
EXPLORING MESOAMERICAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Estimated Timeframe: 3 – 4 Weeks

Begin with a review of the work that your students have done thus far. Review their vocabulary taxonomies and ask them to demonstrate their understanding. Ask students to review their reflective journal entries and to think about what they’ve learned up to this point.

Exploring Ancient Mesoamerican Cities

Each of the cultures that make up the focus of this project developed cities that were well planned and filled with highly ornate temples and other examples of architectural excellence. Your students can gain additional insight into their assigned culture through an understanding of the plan and architecture of the cities they created.

Distribute the Virtual Tour Letter included in the Appendix to your students. Ask students to read it individually and then read it together as a class. Provide time for students to ask questions and to make sure everyone understands what they are being asked to do.

As per the letter, each cooperative group will research two cultural centers built and/or occupied by the culture they researched in Phase One. Each group should research the primary city associated with its culture (listed in bold) and at least one other city associated with that culture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULTURE</th>
<th>CITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olmec</td>
<td>La Venta and San Lorenzo or Laguna de Los Cerros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zapotec</td>
<td>Monte Albán and Mitla, Dainzu, or Teotitlán del Valle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>Tikal and Copán or Palenque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toltec</td>
<td>Tula and Chichén-Itzá11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aztec</td>
<td>Tenochtitlán and Atzcapotzalco</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To help students with their research, provide each group with two copies of the Ancient Mesoamerican Cities Research Guide. Students will use the information from each research guide to create a poster-sized, illustrated graphic organizer demonstrating similarities and differences between the two cities the researched. Remind students to carefully cite all resources.

11 Toltec involvement in Mayan Chichén-Itzá is a topic of debate, as is Toltec influence on the Aztec culture. Encourage students to learn about and to engage in these discussions.
Next, each group will choose one of the cities to create a “virtual tour.” Students may find it helpful to visit other web sites that provide virtual tours. The following web sites may help students plan and present their own tour in an interesting and educational way:

- [http://home.earthlink.net/~pleione4//pithouse/](http://home.earthlink.net/~pleione4//pithouse/)
- [http://coe.ksu.edu/mesa/](http://coe.ksu.edu/mesa/)
- [http://www.inisrael.com/holyland/tour/1.htm](http://www.inisrael.com/holyland/tour/1.htm)
- [http://www.hillside.co.uk/tour/tour.html](http://www.hillside.co.uk/tour/tour.html)

Remind students that their website should “tour” the archeological site, instructing visitors on the important aspects of the places they are visiting. Encourage students to be creative in how they present and conduct their tours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>YELLOW LEVEL, LESSON 11</strong></th>
<th><strong>BLUE LEVEL, LESSON 8</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paragrapging and Topic Sentences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Writing Your Own Story</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Creating a web site</td>
<td>· Creating a web site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replace the writing prompts with the following questions:</td>
<td>Students can skip the “Thinking Ahead” section of this lesson. They should use the information from the <em>Ancient Mesoamerican Cities Research Guide</em> to provide content for each of the pages. They should create one page for each of the following topics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you know about the history of this city?</td>
<td>· The location of the city¹²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are some of the most important buildings or geographic features of the city? Which building or feature is most impressive and why?</td>
<td>· A brief history of the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How were the buildings created? Students can then follow the steps in the lesson to turn their research into an interactive web site.</td>
<td>· An overview of buildings and other interesting sites in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Information about how the buildings were created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· A bibliography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It may be necessary to add additional web pages to cover each of the topics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Building the project:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Students should include a variety of graphics to illustrate their tour. They can also take digital pictures of their model or diorama and include them in the virtual tour.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

¹² This page should include a map showing physical and political features of the region.
Each group will also create a 3-dimensional model or diorama of the city for their tour. This design should include representations for the important buildings (such as temples) of the city. Buildings, streets, and geographic features should be clearly labeled. When your students are finished, ask each group to present its tour and model or diorama to the class.

**Extension Activity: Exploring the mysterious Teotihuacán – The Teotihuacanos were a people who dominated the central Valley of Mexico from 200 BCE – 650 CE. They established the city of Teotihuacán and filled it with resplendent architecture. Their culture influenced many others, including the Maya. For reasons still unknown, they waned and vanished, leaving some of the greatest ruins and deepest mysteries in Mesoamerican history. Ask your students to explore the mysteries of Teotihuacán and to create a model of this city.**

Visit the following websites for more information:
• [http://archaeology.la.asu.edu/teo/](http://archaeology.la.asu.edu/teo/)
• [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/teot/hd_teot.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/teot/hd_teot.htm)

**Post-session activities**

Have students add any new vocabulary to their project notebooks. Ask students to write what they have learned in the *Self-reflection* section of their project notebooks. You may want to prompt students with the following questions:

- How are the cities developed and planned by the different Mesoamerican cultures similar to one another? How are they distinct?
- What can an anthropologist learn about a culture by studying the remains of its cities?

**Surveying Mesoamerican Art and Artifacts**

Through their research of Mesoamerican cultures, your students have been introduced to a variety of art and artifacts created by these cultures. In this activity, students will take a closer look at the significant art and artifacts created by the particular culture they have been studying. Begin by explaining to students that the word artifact means anything made by human skill, such as tools or weapons. Examples of artifacts are pottery, clothing, blankets, hieroglyphs, or any other functional product of the culture.

Distribute the *Art and Artifacts Letter* included in the Appendix to your students. Ask students to read it individually and then read it together as a class. Provide time for students to ask questions and to make sure everyone understands what they are being asked to do.
As per the letter, each cooperative group will create a multimedia presentation of the art and artifacts of their particular culture. The presentation should begin with a brief introduction to the culture. The presentation will include at least three significant pieces of art and at least two artifacts from that culture. For each piece of art and each artifact, the presentation should provide detailed information such as:

- How and why the art or artifact is noteworthy
- How and of what each piece was made
- Approximate date of creation
- A bibliography of sources cited

**Recreating an Artifact**

Students can work individually or with a partner to create a model or other representation an artifact from their assigned culture. Each student should choose an artifact not included in the multimedia presentation. Remind students that their recreated artifact should be consistent with the culture they are studying. They should try to use authentic materials, whenever possible. Each group should create a display placard about the artifact that answers the following questions:

- Which culture created the artifact?
- What was the purpose of the artifact?
- Where did you learn about it?
- How did you recreate the artifact?

When your students have finished their research and created their artifacts, have each group present its work to the class.

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### Yellow Level, Lesson 8

**Speaking and Persuasive Language**

- Creating a brochure

Students can skip the “Thinking Ahead” section of this lesson. They can type the information from the display placards into a Microsoft Word document. They can use this information to create their brochure, using the template.

Each group should make one brochure of artifacts from their assigned culture. Students should use digital pictures of their artifacts in the brochure.

**Post-session activities**

Have students add any new vocabulary to their project notebooks. Ask students to write what they have learned in the Self-reflection section of their project notebooks. You may want to prompt students with the following questions:

- What is the difference between art and artifact?
- What do anthropologists learn by studying the art and artifacts of a past culture?
THE CULMINATING EVENT

After completing this project, it is time to celebrate student achievement. This is one of the more important aspects of the project and will give your students a genuine opportunity to share their accomplishments. It is important to invite people from outside your classroom, such as other classes, teachers, administrators, and parents. Better yet, hold the presentations in the auditorium and invite everyone! Work that was created digitally (presentations, Web sites, etc.) should be presented digitally whenever possible, using projectors or television monitors. Creative pieces, such as artifacts, maps, or newsletters should be displayed attractively using display boards or bulletin boards. You may want to designate one area for presentations and another area for display.

It is important that each student be given a chance to present at least one project. However, you should try to keep each presentation brief (4-5 minutes). Allow students to choose which final projects they would like to present, and keep the day flowing by alternating between different presentation types. Involve your students in planning this day as much as possible. Students should feel that this is their day! Some possible student responsibilities could be:

- Create an invitation and/or posters for the event, to distribute to other classes, teachers, administrators, and parents.
- Decorate the auditorium or room you are holding the event to match the Mesoamerican theme.
- Make simple costumes and dress-up for the event.
- Plan and prepare refreshments for the audience.
- Write memos or letters informing other teachers, administrators, and custodial staff of any schedule or room changes caused by the event.
- Give students a presentation rubric ahead of time so that they know how they will be assessed. Provide time for rehearsals and have a dress rehearsal so that everyone is fully prepared.

Finally, have fun! This is your reward for a job well done!
ADAPTING THIS PROJECT FOR GRADES 4, 6, AND 8

The project was designed as an English Language Arts and Social Studies interdisciplinary unit. This makes it ideal for grades 5 and 7. However, you can modify the project to support language, literacy, and research skills in 6th and 8th grade English Language Arts classes. Before beginning the project, you should identify your goals and objectives. Then identify the activities that support these goals.

Use the following chart to determine which lessons in the FUTUREKIDS Classroom Currents: Language Arts series can be used to support the project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orange (Gr. 4)</th>
<th>Green (Gr. 6)</th>
<th>Purple (Gr. 8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Browser and Word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Combining Clauses in Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word and Publisher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentences in Formal Letters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Browser and PowerPoint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Using Topic Sentences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Browser and Word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Listening and Speaking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Browser and PowerPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking: Appealing to an Audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Browser, Excel and PowerPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead a Class Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Browser and Publisher</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Using Descriptive Language to Write about a Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making Subjects and Verbs Agree: A Numbers Game</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Interpretation: Bringing Literature to Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 16</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Browser and Word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Using Technology to Gather Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Browser and Word</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening for Facts and Opinions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word and Publisher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editing and Proofreading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differences in Genres: Stories and Plays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 15</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Browser, Word, and Publisher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persuasive Writing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 16</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Characterization and Setting in Creative Writing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quoting Characters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing a Book Review</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Browser and Publisher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Key to Effective Arguments</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the project centers on Mesoamerican cultures. However, this content can be replaced with a study of the past cultures of any geographic region. To do this, you will need to do the following:

1. Research the cultures of that region.
2. Find and bookmark a list of web sites that can be used to support student research.
3. Write your own “Backgrounder” handout for that region. Use critical vocabulary in the handout.
4. Modify the letters and other handouts as necessary.
RESOURCES FOR MESOAMERICAN MYTHS, LEGENDS, AND FOLKTALES

Picture Books:
- *My Daughter, My Son, the Eagle, the Dove and Mi Hija, Mi Hijo, El Aguila, La Paloma* by Ana Castillo
- *People of Corn: A Mayan Story* by Mary Joan Gerson
- *The Two Mountains: An Aztec Legend* by Eric A Kimmel
- *Why There is no Arguing in Heaven* by Deborah Nourse Lattimore
- *The Hummingbird King* by Argentina Palacios
- *The Boy Who Wouldn’t Obey* by Anne F. Rockwell
- *Trouble Dolls: A Guatemalan Legend* by Suznne Simons
- *The Rain Player* by David Wisniewski

Mythology Collections:
- *Mayan and Aztec Mythology* by Michael A. Schuman
- *Mayan Folktales from Lake Atitlan, Guatemala* by James D. Sexton

Internet Web Sites:
- [http://weber.ucsd.edu/~anthclub/quetzalcoatl/que.htm](http://weber.ucsd.edu/~anthclub/quetzalcoatl/que.htm)
- [http://www.kstrom.net/isk/maya/mayastor.html](http://www.kstrom.net/isk/maya/mayastor.html)

Students who are interested in this topic may want to read some of the following titles as independent reading.
- *The Aztec News* by Philip Steel (nonfiction)
- *Trapped in Tenochtitlan: An Aztec Adventure* by Eric Burnett (novel)
- *Technology in the Time of the Maya* by Judith Crosher (nonfiction)
- *Aztecs – The Fall of the Aztec Capital* by Richard Platt (nonfiction)
- *Aztec Plays for the Classroom* by Eric Burnett (plays)
Internet Resources (by Culture)

For additional Internet resources on each culture, including Spanish language websites, visit: http://techKNOWassociates.com/mesoamerica/

Anthropology

- http://www2.plattsburgh.edu/anthropology/Web_Instructors.html
- http://www.nmnh.si.edu/anthro/outreach/edfieldwk.html

Guatemala

- http://www.artemaya.com/

Mexico

- http://www.humanities-interactive.org/splendors/timeline.htm
- http://www.mexican-embassy.dk/history.html

Aztec (Mexica) Links

Cultural Overview

- http://members.aol.com/cabrakan/aztec1.htm

Aztec Language


Aztec Calendar

- http://www.azteccalendar.com/
- http://www.ai.mit.edu/people/montalvo/Hotlist/aztec.html

Aztec Religion

- http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/latam/aztec.html

Tenochtitlán

- http://www.anthroarcheart.org/tenochti.htm

Aztec Arts and Crafts

- http://www.hydrogarden.com/class1/aztec.htm
- http://archaeology.la.asu.edu/tm/pages2/mtm60.htm

Teotihuacán

- http://archaeology.la.asu.edu/teo/
**Maya Links**

**Cultural Overview**
- [http://www.halfmoon.org/](http://www.halfmoon.org/)

**Mayan Language**
- [http://www.famsi.org/montgomery/dictionary/mainindex.htm](http://www.famsi.org/montgomery/dictionary/mainindex.htm)

**Mayan Myths, Legends, and Folktales**
- [http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1996/1/96.01.03.x.html#c](http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1996/1/96.01.03.x.html#c)

**Mayan Calendar**
- [http://www.michielb.nl/maya/calendar.html](http://www.michielb.nl/maya/calendar.html)

**Tikal**
- [http://www.destination360.com/tikal.htm](http://www.destination360.com/tikal.htm)
- [http://www.enjoyguatemala.com/tikal.htm](http://www.enjoyguatemala.com/tikal.htm)

**Chichén Itzá**
- [http://www.mysteriousplaces.com/mayan/TourEntrance.html](http://www.mysteriousplaces.com/mayan/TourEntrance.html)
- [http://www.facultysenate.villanova.edu/maya/itza.html](http://www.facultysenate.villanova.edu/maya/itza.html)

**Palenque**
- [http://www.mesoweb.com/palenque/](http://www.mesoweb.com/palenque/)

**Modern Maya**
- [http://www.cancunsouth.com/plan_hist_maya.html](http://www.cancunsouth.com/plan_hist_maya.html)
- [http://www.mnh.si.edu/anthro/maya/](http://www.mnh.si.edu/anthro/maya/)

**Olmec Links**

**Cultural Overview**
- [http://emuseum.mnsu.edu/prehistory/latinamerica/meso/cultures/olmec.html](http://emuseum.mnsu.edu/prehistory/latinamerica/meso/cultures/olmec.html)

**Olmec Language**
- [http://homepages.luc.edu/~cwinter/otmec.htm](http://homepages.luc.edu/~cwinter/otmec.htm)

**La Venta**
- [http://emuseum.mnsu.edu/prehistory/latinamerica/meso/sites/la_venta.html](http://emuseum.mnsu.edu/prehistory/latinamerica/meso/sites/la_venta.html)

**San Lorenzo**
- [http://www.utexas.edu/ftp/cofa/a_ah/dir/precol/san_lorenzo.htm](http://www.utexas.edu/ftp/cofa/a_ah/dir/precol/san_lorenzo.htm)
- [http://members.aol.com/cabrakan/olmec2.htm](http://members.aol.com/cabrakan/olmec2.htm)
**Toltec Links**

**Cultural Overview**
- [http://www.crystalinks.com/toltecs.html](http://www.crystalinks.com/toltecs.html)
- [http://emuseum.mnsu.edu/prehistory/latinamerica/meso/cultures/toltec.html](http://emuseum.mnsu.edu/prehistory/latinamerica/meso/cultures/toltec.html)

**Toltec Language**
- [http://www.azteca.net/aztec/nahuatl/placenam.html](http://www.azteca.net/aztec/nahuatl/placenam.html)
- [http://www.acoyauh.com/nahuatl.html](http://www.acoyauh.com/nahuatl.html)

**Toltec Religion**
- [http://www.rose-hulman.edu/~delacova/toltec-tlaloc.htm](http://www.rose-hulman.edu/~delacova/toltec-tlaloc.htm)
- [http://www.unm.edu/~ecdn/essay1000.html](http://www.unm.edu/~ecdn/essay1000.html)

**Tula**

**Toltec and Chichén-Itzá**
- [http://www.anthroarcheart.org/chichen.htm](http://www.anthroarcheart.org/chichen.htm)

**Toltec Arts and Crafts**
- [http://members.aol.com/xiuhcoatl/toltec.htm](http://members.aol.com/xiuhcoatl/toltec.htm)
- [http://www.utexas.edu/ftp/cofa/a_ah/dir/precol/cacaxtla.htm](http://www.utexas.edu/ftp/cofa/a_ah/dir/precol/cacaxtla.htm)

**Zapotec Links**

**Cultural Overview**
- [http://zapotec.agron.iastate.edu/homepage.html](http://zapotec.agron.iastate.edu/homepage.html)
- [http://www.rosengren.net/artisansinfocus/zapotechistory.htm](http://www.rosengren.net/artisansinfocus/zapotechistory.htm)

**Zapotec Language**

**Zapotec Religion**
- [http://www.angelfire.com/ca/humanorigins/religion.html#zapotec](http://www.angelfire.com/ca/humanorigins/religion.html#zapotec)

**Monte Albán**
- [http://studentweb.tulane.edu/~dhixson/monetalban/monetalban.html](http://studentweb.tulane.edu/~dhixson/monetalban/monetalban.html)
- [http://www.anthroarcheart.org/mtalban.htm](http://www.anthroarcheart.org/mtalban.htm)

**Mitla**
- [http://www.ourmexico.com/features/mitla9911.htm](http://www.ourmexico.com/features/mitla9911.htm)
- [http://www.mexonline.com/oaxaca/oxarc102.htm](http://www.mexonline.com/oaxaca/oxarc102.htm)

**Zapotec Arts, Crafts, and Festivals**
- [http://www.oaxacainfo.com/guelaguetza-oaxaca.htm](http://www.oaxacainfo.com/guelaguetza-oaxaca.htm)

**Modern Zapotec**
- [http://www.artezapoteca.com/photo_gallery.htm](http://www.artezapoteca.com/photo_gallery.htm)
Dear Class __________________________:

Our magazine, Culture Capsule, is in the process of planning a series of educational programs designed to promote anthropology as a career and/or course of study. We plan on taking this tour to middle schools around the country. We have decided to enlist the help of students, just like you, to help us research, plan, organize, and write the various features of this program, in order to ensure that it is both informative and interesting to students your age. Your class has been chosen to help with this innovative undertaking.

The first topic of our series will be an anthropological study of Mesoamerica. This program will include a series of presentations, newsletters, and web sites designed to interest middle school students in learning about Mesoamerican cultures.

While our initial planning is complete, we need you to help provide some background research about the cultures we plan to feature in our program. You will need to discover as much as you can about the following cultures: Olmecs, Zapotecs, Mayas, Toltecs, and Aztecs. For each culture you will need to find the following information:

- Where did they live?
- When did they flourish?
- Why did they vanish?
- What gods did they worship?
- How did they worship?

Once this is complete, you will demonstrate your research to my staff as a multimedia presentation. In order to meet our strict deadlines, this presentation has been scheduled for ________________.

Remember, we want the information we include to be both educational and exciting for students. Thank you, and we look forward to seeing your work.

Sincerely,

Anahuác L. Zaachila

Anahuác L. Zaachila
Senior Editor,
Culture Capsule Magazine
Dear Class __________________________:

Thank you for the excellent work you did for the presentations. My staff was very impressed with both your research and your overall presentation.

We were very much interested in the fact that while the Olmec, Toltec, and Aztec peoples unfortunately have vanished, the Zapotec and Mayan people still exist as distinct cultural groups. Once again we ask you to use the Internet and print resources to conduct an anthropological study of the modern Maya and Zapotec peoples. We would like you to determine where these cultures live today and to find more information on the following topics:

- Written and oral language (including the origins and families)
- Occupations
- Arts and crafts
- Foods
- Customs and traditions

Based on this information, we would like you to produce a newsletter with in-depth information about these modern connections to past cultures. Be sure to make your final product both informative and interesting. We will need the final version of the newsletter by __________________________.

I look forward to seeing your final product. Thank you, once again, for all your hard work.

Sincerely,

Anahuác L. Zaachila

Anahuác L. Zaachila
Senior Editor,
Culture Capsule Magazine
Dear Class ___________________________

Thank you for the excellent research you have done so far. Everyone at Culture Capsule is very impressed with all of your work.

As you have discovered in your research, each of the Mesoamerican cultures we have studied developed well-planned cities filled with temples and other examples of architectural excellence. As part of our anthropological study, we would like to offer students a “virtual tour” of some of these cities.

We would like you to research \textit{at least} two cities from each of the cultures we have explored. Discover how the cities are similar and different from one another. After the research is complete, you will create a “virtual tour” of one city from each culture. Each tour should be presented as an interactive web site. It should include:

- The name of the city
- A map showing physical and political features of the region
- A brief history of the city
- An overview of buildings and other interesting sites in the area
- Information about how the buildings were created
- A bibliography of sources cited

In addition, you will need to create a model, diorama, or other physical representation of each city. You should use digital photographs of your model as part of your virtual tours.

We must have your completed web site and physical representation submitted by _________________. Once again, thank you for all your hard work, and we look forward to seeing your finished products.

Sincerely,

Anahuác L. Zaachila

Anahuác L. Zaachila
Senior Editor,
Culture Capsule Magazine
Dear Class ___________________________:

I am pleased to announce that all of the work you have created for our education program has been very well received. We are now nearing the end of the project and we need your assistance for one final product.

Through your research of each of the Mesoamerican cultures, you have seen a variety of art and artifacts created by these cultures. We would like you to create a presentation for each culture that highlights significant pieces of art and relevant artifacts for each culture. Your presentation should include:

- How and why the art or artifact is noteworthy
- How and of what each piece was made
- Approximate date of creation
- A bibliography of sources cited

In addition, we would like you to recreate a variety of artifacts from each of the cultures for a gallery exhibition. To the extent that it is possible, these artifacts should be created in a manner consistent with the culture and time period it represents. You will need to create a display placard for each artifact in the gallery.

Finally, we look forward to seeing all of your work at our opening event, which is scheduled for _________________. Thank you for all the help you have given this program. We hope you have enjoyed being anthropologists.

Sincerely,

Anahuac L. Zaachila

Anahuac L. Zaachila
Senior Editor,
Culture Capsule Magazine
The **Olmec** are believed to be the earliest Mesoamerican culture to develop an advanced civilization. They lived in the forests of Veracruz and Tabasco, and they flourished from approximately 1200 BCE to 600 CE. Over the course of their long history, they built three great centers: La Venta, San Lorenzo, and Laguna de Los Cerros. The Olmec created beautiful and intricate artwork, including gigantic stone heads. Scholars believe that overpopulation, environmental degradation, and constant warfare contributed to the Olmec’s demise. The influence of Olmec culture on other Mesoamerican peoples existed long after their disappearance.

The **Zapotec** lived in Oaxaca on Mexico’s Pacific coast. No one is sure where they came from; even the Zapotec don’t know. One legend explains that they sprang from Oaxaca’s trees and animals. Around 500 BCE, the Zapotec began building the city of Monte Albán. Later, they constructed Mitla, whose name means “the place of the dead.” The Zapotec were known for their fine textiles. Zapotec weaving was so admired by the Aztecs that they made the delivery of textiles part of Zapotecan tribute to them. The Zapotecs developed writing that is part phonetic (like ours) and part hieroglyphic. Although their civilization faded around 1300 CE, the Zapotec are still a distinct culture today. They continue to weave fine blankets and rugs as their ancestors did centuries ago.

The **Maya** culture flourished in the El Petén region of northern Guatemala from 600 BCE-800 CE. They were expert builders and constructed the magnificent cities of Tikál and Copán. Tikál is noted for the six pyramids that grace the city, the tallest of which stands 230 feet high! Mysteriously, the Maya abandoned most of their cities in El Petén, including Tikál, around 800 CE. Many of the Maya moved to Mexico’s Yucatan peninsula and built cities such as the magnificent Chichén-Itzá. Some went to southern Guatemala and built centers there. The Maya developed a highly accurate calendar that was adapted by the Toltec and Aztec peoples. Over the centuries they built many intricate buildings and created delicate art. By the 1550’s, the Spanish had conquered almost all of the Maya. Like the Zapotec, the Maya still exist today as a distinct culture.

The **Tolteca-Chichimeca** (or **Toltec**) are believed to have originated in Zacatecas. In the early 900’s, they entered the Valley of Mexico and established their capital at Culhuaçán, now Mexico City. Around 968, led by the warrior-priest Topiltzin-Quetzacóatl, the Toltec built the city of Tula, in present day Hidalgo (about 50 miles northwest of Mexico City), and made it their new capital. In the late tenth century, a religious and political struggle seized Tula and Topiltzin-Quetzacóatl lost power. Toltec legend tells how he and some followers made their way to the coast and sailed across the Gulf of Mexico to Mayan lands. After some time, they became the rulers of Chichén-Itzá. After Topiltzin-Quetzacóatl’s departure from Tula, Toltec society appears to have become more militaristic and warlike, engaging in the conquest of other cities and in human sacrifice. Great stone pillars, carved to look like fierce warriors, appear in Toltec centers and seem to capture how the people felt during this time. The Toltec are also credited with carving the Chacmool of Chichén-Itzá. By 1200 CE drought, famine, and constant wars caused the ruin of Tula and the dispersal of the Toltec. They spread in many directions and were absorbed by other cultures.

The last Mesoamerican empire to rise before the Spanish arrived was the **Aztec** (or Mexica). When the Aztec arrived in what is now Mexico City around 1200 CE, all of the good land was occupied. Over time, they were permitted to occupy lands near Lake Texcoco. Slowly, they began to build their city, Tenochtitlán, around 1325 CE on an island in the lake. By 1400 CE, the Aztec established a royal dynasty. The Aztec used the land’s natural resources to their advantage, employing chinampas to cultivate plants for food and to claim land. Chinampas are rafts that are covered with dirt dredged from the lake. The Aztec floated these rafts in the lake and planted seeds in the soil. The plants’ roots would make their way to the lakebed and anchor themselves in the mud. Over time the area would be turned into habitable land. The Aztecs were also master builders and built pyramids of various types in Tenochtitlán and elsewhere over the span of their empire. In 1521 the Aztec met the Spanish. Less than 100 years later the Aztec disappeared.
Ancient Mesoamerican Cities Research Guide

Where is the center located?

When was it founded?

Center_________
Culture_________

Why did the center fall?

How many people lived there?

What events happened there?

Who lived there?
Sample Rubric for Multimedia Project:  (Fill in ___s as appropriate.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 NOT YET</th>
<th>2 GETTING THERE</th>
<th>3 MEETING THE STANDARD</th>
<th>4 ABOVE STANDARD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC AND CONTENT</strong></td>
<td>Includes little essential information to support argument. Includes no sense of audience and purpose. Includes fewer than ___ pages.</td>
<td>Includes some essential information to support argument. Includes little sense of audience and purpose. Includes fewer than ___ pages.</td>
<td>Includes essential information to support argument. Includes some sense of audience and purpose. Includes at least ___ pages.</td>
<td>Covers the topic completely and in depth. Includes an understanding of audience and purpose. Includes at least ___ pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MECHANICS</strong></td>
<td>Includes more than ___ errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.</td>
<td>Includes between ___ and ___ errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.</td>
<td>Includes fewer than ___ errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.</td>
<td>Grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are correct. No errors in text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COORDINATIVE GROUP WORK</strong></td>
<td>Cannot work with others in most situations. Cannot share decisions or responsibilities.</td>
<td>Works with others but has difficulty sharing decisions and responsibilities.</td>
<td>Works well with others. Takes part in most decisions and contributes a fair share to group.</td>
<td>Works well with others. Assumes a clear role and related responsibilities. Motivates others to do their best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ORAL PRESENTATION</strong></td>
<td>Has great difficulty communicating ideas. Uses poor voice projections. Shows little preparation or incomplete work.</td>
<td>Has some difficulty communicating ideas due to one or more of the following: voice projection, lack of preparation, or incomplete work.</td>
<td>Communicates ideas with proper voice projection. Adequate preparation and delivery apparent.</td>
<td>Communicates ideas with enthusiasm, proper voice, projection, appropriate language, and clear delivery. Is able to get audience enthusiastic or interested in topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCALE:</strong> TOTAL POINTS TO DETERMINE SCORE</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>15-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Rubric for Newsletter or Brochure: (Fill in ___s as appropriate.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research and Content of Individual Page:</th>
<th>1 Not Yet</th>
<th>2 Getting There</th>
<th>3 Meeting the Standard</th>
<th>4 Above Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research and Content of Individual Page:</td>
<td>Includes little essential information and one or two facts. Research is from only one source.</td>
<td>Includes some essential information and few facts. Research is from only one or two sources.</td>
<td>Includes essential information with enough elaboration to give readers an understanding of the topic. Research is from several sources.</td>
<td>Covers the topic completely and in depth. Includes properly cited sources and complete information. Encourages readers to know more. Research is from a variety of different types of sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics of Individual Page</td>
<td>Includes more than ___ errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.</td>
<td>Includes between ___ and ___ errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.</td>
<td>Includes fewer than ___ errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.</td>
<td>Grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are correct. No errors in text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Group Work</td>
<td>Cannot work with others in most situations. Cannot share decisions or responsibilities.</td>
<td>Works with others but has difficulty sharing decisions and responsibilities.</td>
<td>Works well with others. Takes part in most decisions and contributes a fair share to group.</td>
<td>Works well with others. Assumes a clear role and related responsibilities. Motivates others to do their best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout and Presentation of Individual Page</td>
<td>Individual page is not attractive to look at. It may be unclear or difficult to read. It includes one or no graphics.</td>
<td>Individual page is not attractive to look at. Parts may be unclear or difficult to read. It includes few graphics or poor quality graphics.</td>
<td>Individual page is attractive to look at. It is clear and easy to read. It includes a few, appropriate graphics.</td>
<td>Individual page is attractive and interesting to look at. It captures the attention and is clear and easy to read. It includes good quality graphics that add to the overall appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale: Total Points to Determine Score</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>15-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>