



Who Were the Mayans?

Ancient Mayan Civilization



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Published by K20 Center

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Grade Level	6th Grade	Time Frame	3 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	150 minutes
Course	World Geography		

Essential Question

Who were the Mayans? What made the Mayan civilization unique?

Summary

Students will investigate the culture of the Mayan civilization through observation and inquiry. Students will choose a topic about the Mayans to investigate and present their findings to the class through a variety of formats.

Snapshot

Engage

Groups of three are given a photo about the Mayan civilization and interpret its meaning through the IT'S OPTIC-AL strategy.

Explore

Students watch a short video about the Mayans, write down their observations about the video, and generate questions.

Explain

Questions about the Mayans are identified by the students and teacher. Students will research these questions in depth and present their findings through a choice of presentation formats.

Extend

Students exhibit their understanding of the Mayans through a RAFT writing task.

Evaluate

The students' Mayan presentation activities and RAFT writing will serve as evaluations for this lesson.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies Practices (6th grade))

6.3: The student will identify the characteristics, distribution, and demographic patterns of human populations and systems of the Western Hemisphere.

6.3.2: Identify and describe cultural traits of language, ethnic heritage, religion, and traditions practiced among peoples.

Attachments

- [Lesson Slides—Who Were the Mayans.pptx](#)
- [Mayan RAFT Writing - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Mayan RAFT Writing - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Mayan RAFT Writing.docx](#)
- [Mayan RAFT Writing.pdf](#)
- [OPTIC Photo Deconstruction - Spanish.docx](#)
- [OPTIC Photo Deconstruction - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [OPTIC Photo Deconstruction.docx](#)
- [OPTIC Photo Deconstruction.pdf](#)
- [Possible Questions for Student Research - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Possible Questions for Student Research - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Possible Questions for Student Research.docx](#)
- [Possible Questions for Student Research.pdf](#)
- [Presentation Rubric - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Presentation Rubric - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Presentation Rubric.docx](#)
- [Presentation Rubric.pdf](#)
- [Who Were The Mayans Photo Pages.pdf](#)

Materials

- OPTIC Graphic Organizer handout (attached)
- RAFT Writing handout (attached)
- Presentation Rubric handout (attached)
- Research Question handout (attached; optional)
- Photo pages 1-12 copied for pairs
- Lesson Slides
- Student devices with internet access

Engage

Teacher's Note: Photo Preparation

Prior to beginning this lesson, you will need to make copies of the 12 photos about Mayan civilization so that there are enough for a class set. If possible, try to make color copies of the photos so that students can see the colors that Mayans used in their artwork. Another suggestion is to laminate the photo pages so that they can be used by multiple classes.

Day 1, Photo Deconstruction: Show students **slides 1–3**. Ask students to show a hand of one to five of what they know about the Mayans using the visual chart on slide 3. Call on a few students randomly to share what they do know about the Mayans. Tell students that today they will be learning more about the Mayans. Place students in working pairs.

Give each student an **OPTIC Photo Deconstruction** handout and explain that the pairs will analyze a picture about the Mayan civilization. Show **slide 4** that explains the OPTIC strategy. Pass out a photo to each pair. Allow about 15 to 20 minutes for pairs to analyze their photo and write their answers in the OPTIC handout.

Once most pairs are finished, have them combine with any other pairs who had the same photo to form groups of four to six. Have them share information from their photo deconstruction with each other. Have group members add any information shared to their own handouts.

Next, groups will discuss what conclusion they came to about the photo with the class. When called on, groups are to volunteer a conclusion about the Mayans. Display **slides 5–16** that show the corresponding photos as groups share out their conclusions and reasoning.

Explore

Day 2, Questions about the Mayans: Have students turn their OPTIC handouts over onto the back side, which is blank. Ask them to write down any facts they think are important to know about the Mayans as they watch a brief (4 minute) video about the Mayans: [Ancient Maya 101](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6eBjdca14). Allow a few minutes after the video concludes for students to write down their thoughts.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=Q6eBjdca14>

Have students share out what they wrote and hold a brief discussion about this added information. Ask each student to look over the information they have gathered from their photo and the video. Have each student create a question about the Mayans that they would like to have answered. Call on volunteers to share out their questions. As students share out, add the questions to a Google document, whiteboard, or interactive whiteboard.

Explain

Days 3-4, Research and Presentation Activity: If students do not generate many questions, there is a starter question list provided in the **Possible Questions for Student Research** handout. Students can add their own questions to this starter list. Once a list of questions is finalized and shared with the class, you can randomly assign one question to every student or group of students or allow students to choose their own question from the list. Depending on time allowed for presentations and the completion of this lesson, you might choose to assign more than one question per student or group.

Pass out copies of the **Presentation Rubric** handout to all students. Go over the expectations for the presentation. Students are to have a written summary of the answer to their research question or questions and a visual presentation (a chart, poster, slides, skit, Prezi, or another format approved by you). Allow one class period for research and one class period for presentations.

Teacher's Note: Presentation Note-Taking

You might want other students to take notes as each question is addressed during the group presentations. Students can take notes on their copies of the research question list (if used) or in their personal notebooks. These notes can also be used for the Extend activity.

Extend

Day 5, RAFT Writing: Pass out copies of the **Mayan RAFT Writing** handout and show **slide 17**. To gain an understanding of what students have learned, have them choose a role and write to the specified audience in the format that is listed about the topic. For example, if a student chooses the Mayan king, the student will write in the role of a Mayan King preparing a speech for his subjects about why they should go to war with the neighboring city-state. Students might need their notes from the research activity to complete this assignment. Suggest to students that the written RAFT should be at least 3/4 page long and address the topic thoroughly. The writing should show an in-depth understanding of the lesson.

Evaluate

The OPTIC activity, the student presentation, and the RAFT writing will serve as evaluations for this lesson.

Resources

- National Geographic. (2018, April 29). Ancient Maya 101 [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6eBjJdca14>