Land and Life

How place shaped communities across the early Americas

SS24.7.10 "Describe cultural and economic characteristics of early Indigenous peoples in North and South America, including civilizations in Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Mississippi River Valley..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline places and movement routes, circle ways people got food, and number details that connect buildings or leaders to beliefs. Use your marks to compare communities.

Across the Early Americas

1 Long before Europeans crossed the Atlantic, Indigenous peoples lived across the Americas. Some ancestors of today's Indigenous peoples moved from northeast Asia into North America during the last Ice Age, when lower seas exposed land called Beringia. Over many generations, their descendants spread south by different routes. Much later, the Olmec developed communities on the Gulf Coast of present-day Mexico. During the Woodland period, diverse peoples lived across eastern North America, including the Mississippi River Valley. They traded goods over long distances and, in some communities, built earthen mounds.

2 Food production looked different in each place. On the Gulf Coast, Olmec farmers grew maize in a warm, wet region with rivers and fertile soil. In the Andes of South America, farmers grew potatoes on high mountain slopes and built terraces to make flatter fields. Woodland peoples in the eastern forests grew crops such as sunflowers, while hunting, fishing, and gathering also supplied food. In ancient Egypt, outside the Americas, farmers used Nile floodwater and irrigation canals to grow crops such as wheat. Farmers in both the Americas and Egypt adapted to local land and water.

3 In the Maya lowlands of Mesoamerica, farmers grew maize, beans, and squash. Harvests helped support craft workers and builders in cities. Maya cities had temples on tall platforms beside public plazas. Rulers sponsored building projects and took part in religious ceremonies there, linking political power to sacred places. Different Maya cities had their own rulers, rather than one ruler over all Maya people. A busy plaza could bring together traders exchanging goods, families attending ceremonies, and leaders addressing the community. Buildings reveal more than design: they show how belief, work, and government met.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Describe one early migration pattern in the Americas. Then locate the Olmec and Woodland peoples.

2. How did farmers in the Andes and ancient Egypt each adapt to their land and water?

3. Compare how Olmec and Woodland communities got food. What other economic activity did Woodland peoples practice?

4. How did Maya temples and plazas connect religion with rulers' political power?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Propose two museum exhibit models, one from the Andes and one from the Maya lowlands. In five sentences, explain how each model shows a connection between farming or local land and community life, and explain how a Maya ruler used a public space.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline places and movement routes, circle ways people got food, and number details that connect buildings or leaders to beliefs. Use your marks to compare communities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Describe one early migration pattern in the Americas. Then locate the Olmec and Woodland peoples.	**Some ancestors moved from northeast Asia into North America and, over many generations, their descendants spread south. The Olmec lived on the Gulf Coast of present-day Mexico. Woodland peoples lived across eastern North America, including the Mississippi River Valley.**
2	How did farmers in the Andes and ancient Egypt each adapt to their land and water?	**Andean farmers built terraces for fields on mountain slopes. Egyptian farmers used Nile floodwater and irrigation canals.**
3	Compare how Olmec and Woodland communities got food. What other economic activity did Woodland peoples practice?	**Both grew crops: the Olmec grew maize, and Woodland peoples grew crops such as sunflowers. Woodland peoples also hunted, fished, and gathered food. They traded goods over long distances.**
4	How did Maya temples and plazas connect religion with rulers' political power?	**Rulers sponsored building projects and took part in religious ceremonies at temples and plazas, connecting their leadership to sacred public spaces.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My first model would show potato fields on terraces in the Andes. The terraces would show how farmers made flatter fields on steep slopes. My second model would show a Maya plaza beside a temple, with builders at work. Maya harvests helped support those builders and other workers in cities. A Maya ruler could sponsor the buildings and take part in a religious ceremony in that public space.

Accept other accurate wording and details drawn from the passage. For the exhibit task, look for two distinct models, a connection between each model and community life, and an accurate explanation of a Maya ruler's use of public space.