Land and Belief

How societies shaped places and were shaped by them

SS24.8.6 "Describe key aspects and figures of Indigenous societies during the Postclassic Period in Mesoamerica and the Andean region and the Mississippian Period in North America, including the Maya, Aztec, and Inca civilizations..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one environmental resource or challenge for each society, then circle something people built or used in response. Number two details that show how beliefs shaped a place or practice.

Places People Shaped

1. In Mesoamerica, Postclassic Maya communities lived in separate city-states rather than one empire. At Mayapan, on the Yucatán Peninsula, people drew water from cenotes, natural openings to water beneath the limestone ground. Maya priests tracked calendars that helped organize ceremonies honoring their gods. Farther west, the Aztec built Tenochtitlan on islands in Lake Texcoco. They made chinampas, raised planting beds in shallow lake water, to grow food near the city. Under ruler Moctezuma II, the capital drew goods from lands the Aztec controlled. Temples held ceremonies linked to their many gods.

2. Across the Andes, the Inca expanded an empire from the highlands of present-day Peru. Emperor Pachacuti helped turn the city of Cusco into the center of that empire. Steep slopes limited flat farmland, so farmers built terraces supported by stone walls. Channels carried water to crops, while roads and rope bridges connected settlements across mountains and valleys. The Inca honored Inti, a sun god, and held ceremonies tied to farming and the seasons. Stone temples in Cusco showed how religious life shaped the city's buildings.

3. In North America, Mississippian societies grew along major rivers during the Mississippian Period. Near the Mississippi River, Cahokia became a large center with nearby fields of maize. Rivers offered water, fertile floodplains, and travel routes for trade. Workers built huge earthen mounds; some supported buildings used for ceremonies or leadership. At Cahokia, a circle of wooden posts helped mark the sun's position at different times of year. Like the societies farther south, Mississippian communities shaped land for food and gathering, but they developed their own traditions rather than copying another civilization.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Maya at Mayapan and the Aztec at Tenochtitlan use different sources of water?

2. How did two Inca engineering choices help people live across the Andes?

3. How did religious beliefs shape a practice or building in both Maya and Inca communities?

4. Why was the area near the Mississippi River useful to Cahokia, and how did its people shape that place for gatherings?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine advising a new community in one environment from the passage. In 5 to 6 sentences, propose where to settle, a way to farm or build, and a place for a ceremony. Explain your choices using at least two details from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Land and Belief

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one environmental resource or challenge for each society, then circle something people built or used in response. Number two details that show how beliefs shaped a place or practice. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Maya at Mayapan and the Aztec at Tenochtitlan use different sources of water?	**People at Mayapan drew water from cenotes beneath the limestone ground. The Aztec built in Lake Texcoco and used shallow lake water for chinampas.**
2	How did two Inca engineering choices help people live across the Andes?	**Terraces made farmland on steep slopes. Roads and rope bridges connected settlements across mountains and valleys.**
3	How did religious beliefs shape a practice or building in both Maya and Inca communities?	**Maya priests used calendars to organize ceremonies honoring their gods. The Inca held ceremonies tied to farming and the seasons and built stone temples in Cusco.**
4	Why was the area near the Mississippi River useful to Cahokia, and how did its people shape that place for gatherings?	**The river area offered water, fertile floodplains, and trade routes. People built earthen mounds, some of which supported buildings used for ceremonies or leadership.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would place a new community on higher ground near a river. Cahokia grew near the Mississippi River, where fertile floodplains supported fields of maize. Our community could plant maize near the water while keeping homes away from floods. I would ask workers to build an earthen mound for a gathering place, like the mounds at Cahokia. We could hold a seasonal ceremony there, using a circle of posts to mark the sun's changing position.

Accept other proposals that fit an environment in the passage and explain a farming or building choice and a ceremony place. The response should use at least two accurate passage details, but its proposed community need not copy a historical society.