Cities and Solutions

Compare how three civilizations met the needs of their communities

WH.3.6 "Compare and contrast the developments and achievements of the Maya, Aztec, and Inca civilizations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one way each civilization managed food or water. Circle two details that show a difference between two civilizations.

Three Landscapes, Three Civilizations

1 Imagine carrying maize through a Maya city around 800 CE. In the lowlands of present-day southern Mexico and Central America, many cities had their own rulers rather than one emperor. Farmers grew maize, beans, and squash, while workers built reservoirs to save rainwater for dry months. Some communities also shaped hillsides into terraces. Scribes carved glyphs that recorded rulers and important events, and specialists tracked cycles of the sun, moon, and planets for calendars. These shared achievements connected Maya communities, but alliances and rivalries between city-states could change. Maya people and their languages remain today.

2 By the 1400s, the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan stood on an island in Lake Texcoco, in central Mexico. Farmers built chinampas, raised planting plots in shallow lake water, to grow crops near the city. Canoes carried produce through canals, and causeways linked the island to land. Unlike the Maya city-states, an alliance led by Tenochtitlan ruled a wide empire and demanded tribute, including food and cloth, from many conquered communities. Markets also brought goods into the capital. Managing a crowded lake city required different farming and transport methods from storing seasonal rain in Maya reservoirs.

3 Farther south, the Inca built an empire across the Andes in the 1400s and early 1500s. Farmers cut terraces into steep slopes and used irrigation channels to bring water to fields. Officials organized labor to build roads and bridges, while runners passed messages between stations. Storehouses along the routes held food and other supplies for armies and communities in need. Unlike Maya scribes, Inca officials did not use a glyph writing system; they used knotted cords called quipus to keep numerical records, including counts of goods. Both the Aztec and Inca governed large territories, but mountains called for different routes than canals on a lake.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Maya and Aztec political organization differ?

2. How did Maya reservoirs and Aztec chinampas meet different needs for water or food?

3. Compare one Aztec way of moving food with one Inca way of supplying communities across their territory.

4. How did Maya and Inca recordkeeping differ?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Maya city leaders facing a food shortage. In four sentences, recommend one Aztec or Inca method they could adopt, explain how it would help, and describe one challenge they would face in using it.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · WH.3.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one way each civilization managed food or water. Circle two details that show a difference between two civilizations. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Maya and Aztec political organization differ?	**Many Maya cities had their own rulers, while an alliance led by Tenochtitlan ruled a wide Aztec empire.**
2	How did Maya reservoirs and Aztec chinampas meet different needs for water or food?	**Maya reservoirs saved rainwater for dry months. Aztec chinampas created planting plots in shallow lake water near Tenochtitlan.**
3	Compare one Aztec way of moving food with one Inca way of supplying communities across their territory.	**Aztec canoes carried produce through canals. The Inca used roads and bridges to connect places, with storehouses along the routes holding supplies.**
4	How did Maya and Inca recordkeeping differ?	**Maya scribes used glyphs to record rulers and events. Inca officials used knotted cords called quipus to keep numerical records, such as counts of goods.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Maya city leaders could borrow the Inca practice of keeping food in storehouses along transport routes. Stored maize could be sent to a city whose harvest had failed. Because Maya cities had their own rulers, neighboring cities would need to agree to share their supplies. Rivalries between city-states might make that agreement difficult.

Accept other passage-supported comparisons. For the open task, look for a specific borrowed method, a plausible benefit, and a challenge connected to Maya conditions.