Different Paths, Lasting Achievements

How Indigenous societies shaped life across the Americas

6.C.3.5 "Describe the ethnic heritage of Indigenous cultures of the Western Hemisphere. Explain that various complex societies, economic, and political systems developed on the North and South American continents..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two clues about local environments in the passage, then underline an achievement that responded to each environment. Use your marks to compare how different societies lived.

Many Places, Many Ways of Life

1 Before Europeans arrived, Indigenous peoples built distinct societies across the Americas. In the dry Southwest, Ancestral Puebloan communities built stone homes and managed water for corn; today's Pueblo peoples carry forward related traditions. Farther east, Mississippian peoples grew corn and built earthen mounds at centers such as Cahokia, where leaders organized community life. In northern Canada and Alaska, Inuit families hunted in icy coastal environments. First Nations include many peoples in Canada. After European contact, the Métis emerged as a distinct people with First Nations and European ancestry.

2 In Mesoamerica, the Olmec built raised earthworks in wet Gulf Coast lowlands. They moved heavy stone to carve enormous heads and traded for distant jade, showing organized labor and regional links. Centuries later, Maya communities built reservoirs to store rainwater and cities with stone temples. Maya scholars tracked the sky with calendars and recorded words using glyphs; merchants traded cacao and obsidian. Much later, Aztec armies conquered other peoples. Tribute from conquered towns brought food and goods to their capital, Tenochtitlan, where large markets connected traders across the region.

3 Across the Andes of South America, steep slopes made farming difficult. Inca farmers cut terraces into hillsides and built channels to bring water to crops. From the capital, Cusco, a central government directed officials across a huge empire. Roads and relay runners carried messages, while knotted cords called quipus helped officials keep records. Like the Aztec, the Inca drew resources from regions they controlled. Yet the Inca relied on state-organized labor to build roads and farms, while Aztec rulers collected tribute from conquered towns. These achievements belonged to different peoples, not one shared civilization.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Ancestral Puebloan and Inuit communities respond differently to their environments?

2. Compare how the Olmec and Maya changed their environments. Name one other Maya achievement.

3. How did Aztec conquests bring wealth to Tenochtitlan and connect it with other places?

4. How did the Inca respond to the Andes and govern a large empire? Give one example of each.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum has room for one paired display about Mississippian and Maya communities. Write four sentences comparing how each used local resources or changed its environment, how each organized people or shared ideas, and why the display should present them as distinct cultures.

ANSWER KEY

Different Paths, Lasting Achievements

GRADE 6 · 6.C.3.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two clues about local environments in the passage, then underline an achievement that responded to each environment. Use your marks to compare how different societies lived. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Ancestral Puebloan and Inuit communities respond differently to their environments?	**Ancestral Puebloan communities managed water to grow corn in the dry Southwest. Inuit families hunted in icy coastal environments.**
2	Compare how the Olmec and Maya changed their environments. Name one other Maya achievement.	**The Olmec built raised earthworks in wet lowlands, while the Maya built reservoirs to store rainwater. The Maya also developed glyph writing, tracked the sky with calendars, or built stone temples.**
3	How did Aztec conquests bring wealth to Tenochtitlan and connect it with other places?	**Conquered towns sent food and goods as tribute to Tenochtitlan, where large markets connected traders across the region.**
4	How did the Inca respond to the Andes and govern a large empire? Give one example of each.	**Inca farmers built hillside terraces or water channels. A central government directed officials, supported by roads, relay runners, and quipu records.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mississippian communities grew corn and built earthen mounds at centers such as Cahokia. Maya communities stored rainwater in reservoirs and built stone temples in their cities. Maya writers used glyphs to record words, while Mississippian leaders organized community life at centers such as Cahokia. The paired display shows two distinct cultures with different ways of building and sharing knowledge.

Accept other comparisons supported by the passage. Students should distinguish the societies rather than describe Indigenous peoples as one culture.