

ELA: Grade 7, Lesson 3, Early American Civilizations

Lesson Focus: How the Mayans settled

Learning Objective: Today we will explain how the Maya society adapted and thrived in such a large and diverse region

TN Standards: 7.RI.KID.1, 7.RI.KID.2, 7.RI.KID.3

Teacher Materials:

- 3 column chart

Student Materials:

- Paper and Pencil
- 3 column chart from previous lesson
- Piece of paper

Teacher Do	Student Do
<p><u>Opening</u></p> <p>Hello! Welcome to Tennessee's At Home Learning Series for literacy! Today's lesson is for all our 7th graders out there, though all children are welcome to tune in. This lesson is the third in our series.</p> <p>My name is ____ and I'm a ____ grade teacher in Tennessee schools! I'm so excited to be your teacher for this lesson! Welcome to my virtual classroom!</p> <p>Today we will be learning about Early American Civilizations! Before we get started, to participate fully in our lesson today, you will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Something to write with and a surface to write on• A piece of blank paper• The 3 column chart from our last lesson <p>If you didn't see our previous lesson, you can find it at www.tn.gov/education. You can still tune in to today's lesson if you haven't seen any of our others. But, it might be more fun if you first go back and watch our other lessons since we'll be talking about things we learned previously.</p> <p>Ok, let's get started!</p> <p><u>Intro</u></p> <p>Today we are continuing our journey back in time to learn about early American civilizations. We have learned many details and facts about the geographical features of Mesoamerica and South America.</p>	<p>Students listen and review their own copies of note-taker created in Lessons 1 and 2.</p>

<p>We are going to focus specifically on one of the three early American civilizations: the Maya. Let's review what we added to our 3-column chart so far, looking just at what's under the column for the Maya. [Hold up note-taker from lesson 1 and 2 and review entries just about the Maya.]</p> <p>We will begin reading a text called the, "Golden Age of the Maya" where we're going to learn how the Maya civilization was organized. We will also learn how that organization supported the development of the Maya golden age throughout a very large and diverse region.</p> <p>The big question we want to answer is: How did the Maya society adapt and thrive in such a large and diverse region?</p>	
<p>Teacher Model:</p> <p>Now I will read aloud the first half of this text. Please listen carefully as I read and think about how you might answer our big question. Focus on how the Maya adapted and thrived.</p> <p>Read aloud: The Golden Age of the Maya Désiré Charnay was a French archaeologist who visited the jungles of Central America in the 1800s.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you remember what we said an archaeologist does? [Pause]. They study the remains of past civilizations. • Listen to what he wrote in his journal. As you listen, think about what it would be like to be there with him. <p><i>"The rain is incessant. The damp seems to penetrate the very marrow of our bones; a vegetable mold settles on our hats which we are obliged to brush off daily; we live in mud, we are covered in mud, we breathe in mud; the ground is so slippery that we are as often on our backs as on our feet."</i></p> <p>Charnay's quote ends with,"...the ground is so slippery that we are as often on our backs as on our feet."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think Charnay meant by these words? [Pause] The climate was so wet, it made the ground very muddy. Everyone slipped around as they tried to walk. Can you imagine what that looked like?! 	<p>Students listen to read aloud. Students pause to reflect and add to their 3 column chart when directed by teacher.</p>

Imagine slipping and sliding through mud all day long. Imagine constantly swatting at mosquitoes. Imagine pit vipers and tarantulas resting in trees overhead. Imagine constant heat and humidity.

Mud, poisonous creatures, and muggy weather were all part of Charnay's experiences in the rainforest.

- Does this sound like an adventure you might want to experience? I wonder how many of you have thought about a future career that might take you to a rainforest.

I wonder what made Charnay want to go to Central America in the first place. Let's read more to find out.

Charnay visited Central America after reading a travel book written by John Lloyd Stephens and illustrated by Frederick Catherwood. He was fascinated by the book's illustrations of ancient Maya ruins. Catherwood drew pictures of vine-choked temples poking through clouds. His drawings of carved masks looked like real people. Stephens and Catherwood portrayed abandoned cities, swallowed up by dense forest. Their book captured the imaginations of people from all around the world. "Who were these Maya?" people wondered.

- I love how the author describes the "vine-choked temples" and how abandoned cities were "swallowed up" by dense forest. What do you think he means by this? (Pause) Because the author uses this kind of language, it is easier for me to imagine these Maya ruins covered with vines and large parts of the cities covered in all of the things that grow in the forest. I imagine it might have been hidden and not easily seen.
- Why do you think Charnay and others were so curious about the Maya? [Pause] I am thinking they may have wondered what happened to the people who used to live in the ruins and cities. This would make me curious too!

A Culture Flourishes

The Maya were one of many groups of people who settled in Mesoamerica. They formed agricultural villages at least as early as 1800 BCE. Over time, they established a civilization. As many as five million people inhabited an area that stretched from the highlands of Guatemala to the plains of Yucatán. Between 250 and 900 CE, writing, religion, and art flourished. In certain respects, this era was the golden age for the Maya culture.

This time was called The Golden Age for the Maya.

- What did we read that helps us understand why this era was called The Golden Age for the Maya? (Pause) When I think of gold, I think about how it is a very valuable metal and in turn, “the Golden Age” represents wealth and prosperity. However, during this time writing, religion, and art really took off. These were signs that the Maya civilization was thriving and successful.
- Let’s add this to our three-column chart under Maya. [Model filling in your chart: writing, religion and art flourished during the Golden Age].

The Maya were not ruled by a single ruler. The Maya lived in city-states scattered across considerable distances. Some of these city-states were larger than others. Each had a powerful lord who governed his own city and surrounding areas. The city-states both traded and fought with one another. Maya society was divided into classes with lords in the highest class. Well educated priests were also among the noble, or highest, classes. Both kings and priests lived in palaces close to city centers. Powerful nobles usually lived in the largest houses. Craftsmen lived in smaller homes that were often farther away from the city center. Farmers lived next to their fields that were even farther away.

- Which groups of people were considered to be in the highest social class? [Pause] The lords, well-educated priests were among the highest social class as well. That’s similar to how we think of kings and queens as they rank in other civilizations throughout history and even today.
- The title of this section is “A Culture Flourishes”. Thinking about what you learned in this section, what

does the word flourishes mean? [Pause] It means to be successful.

- **Why would this section be titled “A Culture Flourishes”?** [Pause] We learn how the Maya culture began to thrive and was successful.
- **Take a minute to jot down evidence that the Maya civilization was flourishing during this time.** (Pause). There are many clues, but some of the most important are:
 - **Over 5 million people inhabited this area and that is a lot of people for this time in history. This meant that the civilization had grown and expanded;** [Model filling in your chart: over 5 million people living in this area]
 - **The Maya had expanded so much that they developed a system of city-states that were governed by one powerful lord, or ruler.** [Model filling in your chart: developed system of city-state; governed by one ruler]
- **How is this similar to and different from how states in the United States of America exist?** (Pause) We are all part of a larger system and each has its own governor. However, our governor doesn't rule alone and has lots of people to support making decisions.

Pyramids, Temples, Gods, and Sacrifice

Maya city-states were centers of both government and religion. Each center had some unique architectural designs. However, all centers had stone pyramids and temples. Some of the pyramids served as burial monuments to honor dead kings. Temples occupied the top level of the pyramids, purposefully close to the heavens and the gods. These temples were reserved for rulers and priests. Pyramid-temple complexes often surrounded a central plaza where public ceremonies and festivals took place.

Religion was important to most aspects of Maya life. The Maya's belief in gods and goddesses helped them explain the mystery of life itself. They believed that gods controlled everything. The gods were responsible for the rising and setting of the sun and the phases of the moon. They were certainly responsible for floods and droughts as well as sickness and health. The Maya gave thanks for a bountiful harvest, a cured disease, or a victory in battle. They offered

sacrifices, or precious gifts, to the gods. Sacrificial blood, both of animals and humans, was a common offering. Kings, sometimes called holy lords, were in charge of hosting sacrificial rituals and ceremonies. Toward the end of the Maya's golden age, the city-state Chichén Itzá served as an important Maya center. Chichén Itzá is located in an arid region of the northern Yucatán Peninsula. The Maya believed that Chichén Itzá's Well of Sacrifice was the home of gods who controlled the rain. The Maya offered sacrifices to the rain gods. They did so because they believed that their fields would be watered. This well continued to serve as a sacrificial site for centuries after Chichén Itzá's decline as a major Maya center.

Learning about the religion of the Maya is very interesting and tells us a lot about the way they approached the other parts of their lives.

- What role do you think religion played in daily Maya life? (Pause) Good thinking! The Maya believed in the influence of the gods and goddesses in everyday life. They built temples and offered sacrifices to please and thank the gods and goddesses.
- Let's add to our chart. [Model filling in your chart: believed in gods/goddesses; built temples to please gods/goddesses]

We learned that the Maya offered up sacrifices to the gods.

- What do you think the word sacrifice means in this text? [Pause] It means to offer what one believes is a precious gift. The Mayas offered sacrificial blood of both animals and humans in hopes that the gods would bless them with many things like rain, good health, and a bountiful harvest.
- Why do you think the Maya believed it was important to offer sacrifices at Chichén Itzá's Well of Sacrifice? [Pause] They believed that this well was home to the gods who controlled the rain. Because this part of the Yucatán Peninsula was arid, or very dry, the Maya believed their sacrifices to the gods would bring them the rain they needed to water their fields.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Let's add more to our chart. [Model filling in your chart: offered sacrifices as gifts to their gods in hopes of being blessed with rain, good health, bountiful harvests] <p>Trading from Highlands to Lowlands</p> <p>Trade routes followed rivers, seas, and roads across the Maya region, connecting these indigenous people to one another. Cities were hubs of commerce where people shared ideas and traded goods. The Maya used a barter system for exchanging daily necessities. People in the lowlands traded food, cotton, and jaguar skins for coastal salt and dried fish. People across Mesoamerica used obsidian, a volcanic glass from the highlands, for both jewelry and tools. Wealthy Maya valued precious gemstones and the brightly colored feathers of the rainforest's quetzal bird.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What role did trade and commerce play in the Maya civilization? [Pause] Trade connected people to one another. Commerce made it possible to share ideas and trade goods. ● This would be another important piece of information to add to our chart as we continue to learn about the Mayan civilization. [Model filling in your chart: trade connected people; commerce made it possible to share ideas and trade goods] 	
<p>Guided Practice</p> <p>Take a few moments to collect your thoughts about all you've learned today.</p> <p>Read back through the notes you took on your chart. We talked about several things.</p> <p>Let's go back through to make sure you captured all of this very interesting information. It will come in handy as we continue through this unit.</p> <p>Read the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Writing, religion and art flourished during the Golden Age ● Over 5 million people living in this area ● developed system of city-state; governed by one ruler ● Believed in gods/goddesses; built temples to please gods/goddesses 	<p>Students review notes with teacher and add anything they left out.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offered sacrifices as gifts to their gods in hopes of being blessed with rain, good health, bountiful harvests• Trade connected people; commerce made it possible to share ideas and trade goods	
<p><u>Independent Practice</u></p> <p>The big question we wanted to answer over the course of this lesson and the next lesson was: How did the Maya society adapt and thrive in such a large and diverse region?</p> <p>Based on what we have learned so far, what evidence do we have to support the idea this civilization was thriving?</p> <p>What about how they lived their daily lives would indicate this to be a true statement?</p> <p>[Repeat both questions 2x]</p> <p>Take some time to think about what we read and talked about today. Refer to your notes as well. Then write a letter to Désiré Charnay explaining this using all of the information we have learned over the years about how the Maya people lived.</p>	<p>Students write a letter using the information they learned in this lesson.</p>
<p><u>Closing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I enjoyed learning about Ancient Civilizations with you today! Thank you for inviting me into your home. I look forward to seeing you in our next lesson in Tennessee's At Home Learning Series!• Bye!	

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