

ELA: Grade 7, Lesson 5, Early American Civilizations

Lesson Focus: Developments of the Maya civilization

Lesson Objective: Students will compose a short story from the perspective of an archeological team member that discovered King Pakal's tomb.

TN Standards: 7.RI.KID.1, 7.RI.KID.3, 7.RI.KID.CS.4, 7.RI.CS.5, 7.W.TTP.3

Teacher Materials:

- ELA Grade 7, Lesson 5 Teacher Packet (will hold up images for students to see)
- Three-column chart from previous lesson

Student Materials:

- Piece of paper
- Pencil or pen
- Three-column chart from previous lessons

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 fifth 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 paper• The three-column chart that we have been working with throughout this lesson series <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 begin!</p>	
<p><u>Intro</u></p> <p>[Ask students the following]:</p>	

<p>In today's lesson, we will learn about the important developments of one of the early American civilizations we've been learning about: the Maya civilization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have you ever heard someone speak in a different language and you had no idea what they were saying? [Pause]. It's so interesting to think that people all over the world have ways of communicating with one another, both orally and in writing. Speaking of writing, have you ever tried to read something written in a different language, especially something that isn't written using the alphabet you're used to? (Pause). This is something I'd like for you to keep on your mind during our lesson today. 	<p>Student interacts with teacher's questions as posed. Student will access prior knowledge about early civilizations.</p>
<p><u>Teacher Model</u></p> <p>I'm going to begin reading a section called "Hidden Secrets of the Rainforest." That title should make you curious!</p> <p>Teacher read aloud:</p> <p>Do you like to solve puzzles and break codes? A boy named David Stuart did. The son of archaeologists, David often accompanied his parents to the ancient Maya ruins where they worked. There, he saw sights that he had never seen before. He was particularly fascinated by the sculpted stone monuments called stelae. Often located in the central plazas of Maya cities, these giant pillars featured carvings of images and symbols. David began sketching the carvings when he was only eight years old. One symbol looked like the head of a jaguar. Another resembled an open book. What did these glyphs, or combinations of symbols, mean?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wow, that's some really neat information! What about David Stuart's childhood do you think impacted his fascination with the ancient Maya ruins? (Pause). I think so too! He was the son of archaeologists and was surrounded by the ruins. Isn't it interesting that he began sketching the carvings when he was only eight years old! Pull out a piece of paper and see if you can sketch one quickly. Here are some examples: [Show image L1: A]. It looks like they all are square-ish and have designs carved inside. [Pause and doodle one to show students]. Here is mine! 	

- We read that David noticed some carvings that resembled things he knew, like a jaguar or an open book. The author gave us another word for those images. Do you remember what it was? (Pause). Yes! *Glyphs*. These glyphs, or carved symbols had survived thousands of years of erosion by humidity, heat, and tropical storms, and they greatly puzzled archaeologists.
- Why do you think these glyphs were such a mystery? [Pause]. You're right! No one from the ancient tribes of the Maya civilization was left to explain what they were.
- Great! Let's keep reading.

Teacher read aloud:

Decoding An Ancient Language

David soon learned that archaeologists were often puzzled by these carved symbols. Many of the carvings had survived despite thousands of years of erosion by humidity, heat, and tropical storms. Still, nobody knew what these sequences of symbols meant. Some scholars suspected that the symbols were largely decorative. Others were convinced that the symbols were a form of writing. Among these scholars was a young Russian named Yuri Knorosov, who began to decode, or translate, the hieroglyphics. His translations uncovered the true nature of the Maya writing system. Some glyphs were syllables, or parts of words, while others represented whole words. They were far from being just pretty pictures!

- What did some of the other scholars, like Yuri Knorosov believe these glyphs might be? [Pause]. Yes. Some thought they were just decorative, and some thought they were a form of writing. Hmm...How interesting!
- Take a moment to jot down which YOU would believe if you were one of the first people to discover them: Maya glyphs as *decoration* or *writing*? Then, tell me why. [Pause]. Great! I said that I'd probably fall on the side of decoration, because the ancient ruins I've seen pictures of are full of carvings. I'm not so sure that I would've taken the time to study how the

carvings were similar to one another and likely 'meant' something. I would've needed David and Yuri to convince me for sure!

- Why do you think the scholars were so anxious to learn what these glyphs meant? ([Pause]. I'm thinking that scholars thought the glyphs might reveal important information about the ancient people that created them, and just maybe, some might have thought that the glyphs held secrets...to treasure, maybe?!
- So, we just read that David was *not* the only person to be fascinated by these glyphs, and soon other scholars, like Yuri Knorosov, tried to figure out what they were. They wanted to *decode* the glyphs. What do you think the word *decode* means? [Pause]. Good. It means to interpret or to read. They wanted to READ them. Wow! How does one *read* carved images?
- So, what was it that Yuri discovered about the glyphs? [Pause]. Yes! Yuri worked hard to uncover the mystery of the Maya glyphs. He discovered they represented the Maya writing system: some glyphs were syllables, some were just parts of words, and others were whole words.
- Let's get out our three-column chart we've been using in our lessons and add some more information under the column for the Maya. Let's add... [Model filling in your chart: Maya writing system, glyphs, carved symbols for writing, first decoded by Yuri Knorosov].
- Good job! Let's dig back in.

Teacher read aloud:

Yuri Knorosov published the results of his research in 1952. Some epigraphers, people who decode and interpret ancient writing systems, were doubtful of his work. Others, including David Stuart, were eager to decode more. Today, approximately 85 percent of the Maya glyphs have been decoded. These glyphs help bring the ancient Maya world to

life. They provide records of important dates and events, including the reigns of kings and the movement of the stars.

The Maya developed a system of writing that used around 800 distinct glyphs. Scribes patiently painted symbols onto the folded bark paper of a codex. They created many of these ancient books, or codices. Many codices were destroyed or have disappeared. Hieroglyphics carved in stone, however, continue to tell stories from ancient Maya city-states even today.

- We read that Yuri published the results of his research on the Maya glyphs in 1952, just under 70 years ago. Why do you think it took so long for scholars to decode the glyphs? [Pause]. I'm guessing it is very hard work, but knowing that this wasn't that long ago, it makes sense to think that no one had been able to decode them until then.
- Although Yuri's work helps us to begin understanding the Maya glyphs, we only understand about 85 percent of the Maya glyphs today. I'd like to know why we aren't able to decode the remaining 15 percent. It looks like I'm going to have to do some research of my own. I'd love for you to join me if you can.
- How many distinct glyphs did the text say were in the Maya writing system? [Pause]. Right, around 800. That's unbelievable!
- Now, I'd like for you to look closely at the image of this Maya scribe, which is another word for a person who writes? [Show image L1: B]. What does it look like he is doing? [Pause]. Yes. He's working on painting the glyphs on folded bark paper called a codex. It's like an ancient book. Can you imagine much you'd have to remember and how long it would take to do this work - wow!
- Let's go back to our three-column chart and add some more information under the column for the Maya. Let's add... [Model filling in your chart: 800 distinct glyphs, only know 85%, scribes].

We have learned some very important information about the ancient Maya civilization through decoding the glyphs, including the reigns of kings, the movement of stars, and stories about the Maya people. That is so cool! Now that I have you hooked, let's keep going!

Teacher read aloud:

Buried Treasure in the Temple of Inscriptions

Palenque, in present-day Mexico, contains one of the longest carved hieroglyphic texts yet found. Elements of Palenque's history are carved on panels that form the walls of its Temple of Inscriptions. This temple was built to honor one of Palenque's kings, King Pakal.

K'inich Janaab' Pakal rose to power when he was only 12 years old. He ruled Palenque for nearly 70 years. Pakal, like other Maya rulers, spent many years planning his own burial tomb. The tomb inside Palenque's famous Temple of Inscriptions lay hidden for many years. In 1948, a Mexican archaeologist named Alberto Ruz Lhuillier discovered a trap door that led to the tomb.

It took four years for Alberto Ruz Lhuillier and his team to carefully clear rubble from the opening beneath the trap door. There, they discovered a stairway leading down to the king's sarcophagus, or coffin. When archaeologists opened the coffin's ornate lid, they found what is presumed to be Pakal's skeletal remains. He was buried with an abundance of jade, the Maya's most precious stone. Jade necklaces, earrings, rings, and bracelets filled the coffin. The most magnificent of all the pieces was the mosaic death mask. It was common practice in Maya culture to place masks over rulers' faces to protect them in the afterlife. Pakal's mask is spectacular. Made from hundreds of pieces of green jade, the mask features decorative pieces of shell and dark obsidian.

- So, we learned that the Temple of Inscriptions was built to honor a king named Pakal. How old was he when he came to rule? [Pause]. Wow, just 12 years old!

- **King Pakal came to power when he was only 12 and ruled for nearly 70 years, that's a long time! He spent years planning his burial tomb which included hieroglyphics on the walls. Take a moment to jot down what you believe was so fascinating about the hieroglyphics found on the walls of the Temple of Inscriptions? [Pause]. I'm thinking they are probably a beautiful sight, plus they are one of the longest carved hieroglyphic texts ever found to date. They weren't even discovered until 1948! Not that long ago.**
- **We also read that archaeologists discovered a trap door that led to the tomb of King Pakal. What did they discover behind the hidden trap door? (Pause). Cool, yes - they found the king's sarcophagus, or coffin.**
- **What was so special about the items in the king's sarcophagus? (Pause). Right, he was found with lots of precious stones made into jewelry and embedded into his death mask. This is a picture of the king's real death mask! [Show image L5-C].**
- **Take a moment to jot down, what you remember about why ancient Mayas would place a death mask over a ruler's face? (Pause). They believed it would protect them in the afterlife. I wonder if the Maya glyphs tell us what they believed one might encounter in the afterlife and how a death mask would be protection...I'll add it to my future research!**
- **Let's grab our three-column chart. We have some information to add under the column for the Maya. Let's add... [Model filling in your chart: Temple of Inscriptions for King Pakal, ruler at 12 years old, trap door to secret tomb - found 1948, and death mask made with precious jade].**

Great job on your chart today! Let's step back and look at all that we've added today. Wow, that's a lot of new information about the Maya! This will really help you finish up today's lesson.

<p><u>Guided Practice</u></p> <p>I'd like for you to answer some questions that will get you thinking and prepare you for today's independent practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role have archeologists played in discovering what we know about the ancient Maya civilization today? (Pause). Yes, because of archeologists, we have a pretty good idea about how the Maya lived, what they grew, who ruled and when, and much more. 	<p>Student responds to question</p>
<p><u>Independent Practice</u></p> <p>Go back to your three-column chart. [Show students your example] Get your writing paper and a pen or pencil ready.</p> <p>I want you to imagine that you are one of the archaeologists that discovered King Pakal's tomb. Write a narrative story describing your experience from the time that your team walked into the Temple of Inscriptions, your amazement when you see the wall of hieroglyphics, and then finally your team's discovery of King Pakal's tomb behind the trap door. [Read writing prompt 2x] I'm going to read that one more time.</p> <p>I want you to imagine that you are one of the archaeologists that discovered King Pakal's tomb. Write a narrative story describing your experience from the time that your team walked into the Temple of Inscriptions, your amazement when you see the wall of hieroglyphics, and then finally your team's discovery of King Pakal's tomb behind the trap door.</p> <p>Use the new information on your chart to provide good descriptions and details. Your chart should also help you stay close to some real facts even though you are making your story up. This is called historical fiction!</p> <p>I'm so excited for you to write this story! Make it a bit mysterious and really fun for your family and friends to read when you are done.</p>	<p>Student composes a short story (narrative) from the perspective of an archeological team member that discovered King Pakal's tomb.</p>
<p><u>Closing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I enjoyed learning about the Ancient Maya Civilizations with you today! Thank you for inviting me into your home. I look forward to seeing you in 	

<p>our next lesson in Tennessee's At Home Learning Series!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good-bye!	
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