Aztecs, Incas, and Mayans – Oh My!

A closer look at these early civilizations

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Grade Level: 4th
Duration: 3 class periods

National Geography Standards
Element Two: Places and Regions
Standard 4 – The physical and human characteristics of places.

Arizona Geography Strand
Concept 2: Places and Regions
PO 6. Describe elements of culture in areas studied (e.g., Mexico, Central and South America).

Other Arizona Standards
Strand 1: American History
Concept 2: Early Civilizations
PO 4. Identify the early civilizations (e.g., Maya, Aztec, Inca/Inka) that developed into empires in Central and South America.
PO 5. Recognize the achievements and features of the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca/Inka civilizations

ELA Common Core Standards
Reading
Informational Text
Key Ideas and Details
4.RI.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
4.RI.3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

Writing
Production and Distribution of Writing
AZ.4.W.4 Produce clear and coherent functional writing (e.g., friendly and formal letters, recipes, experiments, notes/messages, labels, graphs/tables, procedures, invitations, envelopes) in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

Overview
Students need to understand that there were great civilizations that existed hundreds of years ago. Greece and Rome are often stressed. What about other parts of the world?
Purpose
In this lesson students will identify the early civilizations that developed into empires in Central and South America.

Materials
- Map of Latin America
- Aztec, Inca, & Mayan Student Readings
- Early Civilization Graphic Organizer and Answer Key
- Assessment: Please Come Explore (Aztec, Inca, or Maya) Writing Prompt and Grading Criteria
- Copyright clip art that can be used for images to discuss the civilizations

Objectives
The student will be able to:
1. Identify early civilizations that developed in Central and South America.
2. Recognize the achievements and features of Aztec, Inca, and Mayan cultures.
3. Describe elements of these cultures.

Procedures

Session One
1. Show some pictures of the three cultures: Aztecs, Incas, & Mayan. You can use the clip art images included or find larger images in library books, etc. Ask: Are there any similarities/differences that you notice?
2. Distribute the Map of Latin America. Have the student locate and label: Mesoamerica, South America, Chichen Itza, Machu Picchu, and Tenochtitlan.

Session Two
3. Have students take turns and orally read the Aztec, Inca, & Mayan Student Readings. Discuss unfamiliar terms and cultural elements.
4. Partner students together to work on the graphic organizer.

5. Use a transparency of the graphic organizer and have the class complete the Early Civilization Graphic Organizer.

Session Three
6. As a class, brainstorm ideas for exploring civilizations. Possible answers could include: to find new resources, to establish new colonies, to locate precious gems, to find new foods, to become famous, to spread their religion, etc.
7. Introduce the writing prompt and how it will be graded.

Assessment
The students’ letters and illustrations will be assessed using the scoring guide. Mastery will be considered a score of 80% or higher.

Extensions
Research what effect the Spanish had on each civilization.

Compare these early civilizations to the study of Native Americans in Arizona that are studied during this year. Use the same graphic organizer and then compare the results.

Sources
Greene, Jacqueline D. The Maya. ISBN – 0-531-20067-7
Pratt, Richard. DK Discoveries – Aztecs the fall of the Aztec Capital. ISBN 0-7894-3957-3
Somervil, Barbara. Machu Picchu City in the Clouds. ISBN – 0-516-25123-6