

# El Misterio de los Mayas Unit Plan

<b>Unit Overview</b>
<b>Unit Title</b>
El Misterio de los Mayas (The Mystery of the Mayas)
<b>Unit Summary</b>
Recent research into the Mayan civilization of the Classical Period and a new look at earlier records have caused interpretations of Mayan civilization to change. In this unit, students work in research groups to examine different aspects of Mayan society of the Classical Period. By analyzing the effects of social unrest, increasing environmental pressures, and commercial expansion, students try to determine how the society reacted to threats to their culture. By studying factors that brought about the decline of the ancient Mayas, and through extrapolation to other civilizations and eras, students gain insights into their own cultural experiences.
<b>Subject Area</b>
Spanish Language, Ancient Cultures
<b>Grade Level</b>
9–12
<b>Higher-Order Thinking Skills</b>
Analysis, Synthesis, Investigation
<b>Approximate Time Needed</b>
3 to 4 weeks, 45-minute lessons, 5 days a week
<b>Unit Foundation</b>
<b>Targeted Content Standards and Benchmarks</b>
<b>National Standards for Foreign Language Education (ACTFL):</b>
1.2 Students will understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics. Benchmark: Students will use resources in Spanish to gather data.
1.3 Students will present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics. Benchmark: Students will work cooperatively in groups using Spanish to create a multimedia presentation.
2.1 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and the perspectives of the culture studied. Benchmark: Students will analyze cultural practices related to social customs and religious rituals, use of the environment, commerce, and warfare.
4.2 Students will demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own. Benchmark: Students will compare and contrast cultural perspectives, practices, and the products and hypothesize about cultural systems.
5.1 Students will use the language both within and beyond the school setting. Benchmark: Students will use the target language in the classroom for group discussions and beyond the classroom in the creation of a multimedia presentation.

<b>Student Objectives/Learning Outcomes</b>	
<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Spanish in all aspects of the project</li> <li>• Examine the impact of various disruptive forces (social, environmental, and economic) on religious and political institutions of the Mayan Classical Period</li> <li>• Inquire independently, raise questions, and search out answers related to a research topic</li> <li>• Use critical-thinking skills to analyze data and interpret the significance of their findings in the context of the historical events which led to the collapse of the society</li> <li>• Use a collaborative approach to synthesize the information gathered in individual research, and formulate a hypothesis about the causes and effects of a series of historical events</li> <li>• Compare Mayan society of the Classical Period with that of the present</li> <li>• Assess the value of archeological study and reflect on how knowledge of other cultures enhances understanding of cultural experience</li> <li>• Locate, evaluate, and organize data from various print and electronic sources</li> </ul>	
<b>Curriculum-Framing Questions</b>	
<b>Essential Question</b>	<p>What brings about the rise and fall of great civilizations?</p>
<b>Unit Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors in Mayan society may have contributed to its demise?</li> <li>• What factors in present-day Mayan society contribute to its continued survival?</li> <li>• What factors do you think may have led the Mayas to abandon their cities before 900 AD?</li> </ul>
<b>Content Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the basic cultural institutions of a society?</li> <li>• What are the research methods of archeology?</li> </ul>
<b>Student Assessment Plan</b>	
<b>Assessment Summary</b>	
<p>The unit begins with an <a href="#">assessment to gauge student needs</a>, to determine students' prior knowledge, and to create interest. Questioning is also used throughout the unit to promote students' higher-order thinking and monitor understanding. The English project rubric and the Spanish project rubric are introduced early in the project, so students are aware of expectations before project work begins and can monitor their progress during project work. The rubric is key to the research and presentation components of the unit. The same rubric is used to assess final presentations at the end of project work.</p> <p>Students are also given the group process rubric before work begins so that they are aware of the expectations for collaboration in their group. Students use the same rubric at the end of project work to assess their group collaboration. The teacher uses the collaborative observation sheet to assess collaborative work habits while students are conducting research and creating presentations. The teacher should also meet with students one-on-one and in groups during the research and creation process to answer questions, assess progress, and keep students on track. Encourage students to give peer feedback to other groups after presentations are given.</p> <p>At the end of the project, students write a concluding essay that summarizes their thoughts. Have the students use the <a href="#">6+1 Trait® Writing Scoring Continuum</a>* (PDF; 8 pages) as a guide for their writing. Use this same continuum to assess the concluding essays.</p>	

Assessment Timeline					
Before project work begins		Students work on projects and complete tasks		After project work is completed	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gauging Student Needs Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conferences</li> <li>Peer Feedback</li> <li>Project Rubric</li> <li>Group Process Rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative Observation Sheet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group Process Rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Essay</li> <li><a href="#">6+1 Trait® Writing Scoring Guide</a></li> <li>Project Rubric</li> </ul>

**Unit Details**

**Prerequisite Skills**

- Basic library research and Internet search skills
- Proficiency in the target language to read and interpret resource materials and to express ideas and opinions in written and spoken forms
- Basic knowledge of word processing and creation of a publication document

**Instructional Procedures**

**Tapping Prior Knowledge and Providing Background**

Write the Essential Question on the board, *What brings about the rise and fall of great civilizations?* and have students reflect on it. Hold a conversation about civilizations that includes the Content Question, *What are the basic cultural institutions of a society?*

Ask the gauging student needs questions to begin a discussion about what students already know about the Mayas. Introduce students to Mayan civilization, including a brief account of history, location, languages spoken, and cultural facts based on any gaps in prior knowledge. Include a discussion about the accepted historical viewpoint of the Mayas as well as recent research, which brings new theories to light. Introduce research methods used in archeology and focus on why reflection is an important part of an archeologist’s work.

**Introducing the Project**

Introduce the project using the [Maya Instrucciones](#) handout. Explain that students will conduct inquiries into the factors that led to the demise of Mayan society of the Classical Period. In doing so, students will examine social classes, religious institutions, economic structures, environmental practices, and warfare. Continue to explain that they will share their findings in group discussions and synthesize the information they have gathered individually. Tell students that they will work in small groups to form hypotheses explaining the collapse of the society. Inform students that they will also share their insights on the value of archeological study as a model for understanding their own cultural experiences.

Emphasize the requirement of using Spanish throughout the project, including the research of various print and Internet sources, group discussions, and the presentation of their multimedia project. Distribute the English project rubric and the Spanish project rubric. Review the rubrics with the class and discuss expectations for the projects. Ask students to use the rubrics to guide their project work. Review the sample Spanish multimedia presentation or English multimedia presentation as an example of exemplary student work.

## Starting the Research

Explain to students that for most of this project they will work in groups and will be assessed on their collaborative efforts. Hand out the group process rubric. Review expectations for working collaboratively and ask students to refer to the rubric as they conduct their group work.

Next, assign students to cooperative groups and ask them to choose their topic of individual research. Each student in the group researches a different topic and individual research findings will be interwoven into one group multimedia presentation.

Lead a discussion about the scientific method. Model how a hypothesis is developed and revised as additional information is gathered. Have students develop thesis statements related to their topics that explain what they expect to find. Tell students to design plans that enable them to prove or disprove their thesis statements. Lastly, explain that they need to test and quantify their thesis statements and come to conclusions.

Allow students ample time to conduct their research. As they conduct their research on the assigned topics, direct them to look for factors that may have led to the demise of Mayan society of the Classical Period. Also ask students to examine present-day Mayan culture and look for factors that contribute to its continued survival. Meet with individuals to assess progress.

Have students share their findings in group discussions. Ask students to synthesize individual findings and as a group form a hypothesis explaining the collapse of Mayan society. Meet with collaborative groups to assess their progress and monitor collaborative work using the collaboration observation sheet.

## Presenting Their Work

Guide students as they develop, organize, and prepare their comprehensive slideshow presentations.

Assign groups times to present their findings through slideshow presentations. Allow students to offer feedback and ask questions to other groups after their presentations. Allow time for students to rate themselves and the group on their collaborative effort using the group process rubric. Collect these as an additional viewpoint to consider in your assessment.

## Wrapping Up the Unit

After all groups have presented, lead a discussion to summarize the societal factors that may lead to the demise of any given culture. Also summarize the societal factors that may contribute to a culture's continued survival. You may want to ask questions such as, *In what ways are Mayan culture and our society alike and different?* and the Unit Questions:

- *What factors in Mayan society may have contributed to its demise?*
- *What factors in present-day Mayan society contribute to its continued survival?*

Discuss the value of archeological study as a model for understanding cultural experience and finally revisit the Essential Question, *What brings about the rise and fall of great civilizations?*

Have students write a concluding essay that analyzes our society today. Ask them to examine factors that may lead to our demise as a society as well as factors that contribute to our continued survival and success. Have students refer to the [6+1 Trait® Writing Scoring Continuum\\*](#) (PDF; 8 pages) as a guide for expected writing standards.

## Accommodations for Differentiated Instruction

### Special Needs Student

- Provide guidance for finding sources
- Hold additional conferences to help organize data
- Provide the English project rubric

<b>Nonnative Speaker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide guidance for locating resources</li><li>• Hold additional conferences to help organize data</li><li>• Use an appropriate language version Internet Encyclopedia for research</li><li>• Provide the English project rubric if the student's first language is not Spanish</li></ul>
<b>Gifted/Talented Student</b>	Expand research components to accommodate the student's interests and ability level

Materials and Resources Required For Unit	
<b>Technology – Hardware</b> (Click boxes of all equipment needed)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Camera <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Computer(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Digital Camera <input type="checkbox"/> DVD Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Connection	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Disk <input type="checkbox"/> Printer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Projection System <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scanner <input type="checkbox"/> Television
<b>Technology – Software</b> (Click boxes of all software needed.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Database/Spreadsheet <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop Publishing <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail Software <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encyclopedia on CD-ROM	<input type="checkbox"/> Image Processing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Web Browser <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multimedia <input type="checkbox"/> Web Page Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word Processing <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>Printed Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various library resource texts</li> <li>Carlson, J. B. (1990). America's ancient skywatchers. <i>National Geographic</i> 177, No. 3.</li> <li>Coe, M. D. (1999). <i>The Maya</i>. London: Thames and Hudson.</li> <li>Fash, W. L. (2001). <i>Scribes, warriors, and kings</i>. London: Thames and Hudson.</li> <li>Lafayette R. C. (Ed.) (1996). Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the twenty-first century. In Lafayette R. C. (Ed.), <i>National standards: A catalyst for reform</i>. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.</li> </ul>
<b>Supplies</b>	Each group will determine the specific supplies they will need.
<b>Internet Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Los antiguos mayas y su legado Mundo maya <a href="http://www.ccu.umich.mx/mmaya/recorrido/recorrido.html">www.ccu.umich.mx/mmaya/recorrido/recorrido.html</a>* A comprehensive resource with information about the Mayas</li> <li>National Standards for Foreign Language Education: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages <a href="http://www.actfl.org/index.cfm?weburl=/public/articles/details.cfm?id=33">www.actfl.org/index.cfm?weburl=/public/articles/details.cfm?id=33</a>* Information about teaching foreign languages in the United States</li> <li>Nava Del Negro, Liza. Arte Plumario El Textil mexicano tradicional <a href="http://www.arts-history.mx/textilmexicano/introprehisp1.html">www.arts-history.mx/textilmexicano/introprehisp1.html</a>* A site about textile art produced by the Mayas</li> <li>6+1 Trait® Writing Scoring Continuum <a href="http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/pdfRubrics/6plus1traits.PDF">www.nwrel.org/assessment/pdfRubrics/6plus1traits.PDF</a>* (PDF; 8 pages) A continuum for scoring writing developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory</li> </ul>
<b>Other Resources</b>	<p><b>Film Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Azzarella, D. &amp; Boyajian, A. (Director). (1993). <i>Lost kingdoms of the Maya</i>. [VHS/DVD]. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society.</li> <li>Howells, B. &amp; Rochin, R. (Director). (2002). <i>Mystery of the Maya (IMAX)</i>. [VHS/DVD] Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.</li> </ul>

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