

# Civilization in the Americas

**Chapter 14 The Early Americas**

**Chapter 15 The Aztec and Inca Empires**



An Aztec man stands on a stone platform, gesturing with his right hand raised. He wears a white tunic with a large knot at the chest, a white shawl with a colorful striped border, and a white loincloth with a colorful striped border. He has a small black feather in his hair and is wearing a blue beaded bracelet on his right wrist and a blue beaded bracelet on his left wrist. He is wearing sandals with green and gold details. The background shows a city with stone buildings and a body of water under a blue sky with white clouds. The platform he stands on has a decorative border with a colorful geometric pattern.

## What You Will Learn...

In the Americas, civilizations developed after people learned to grow crops like maize, or corn, and potatoes. Having a steady food supply allowed Native Americans to build large, complex societies.

Three major civilizations developed in the Americas. They were the Maya, Aztec, and Inca civilizations. Each civilization developed farming and trade networks and built large cities and temples.

In the next two chapters, you will learn where the civilizations of the Americas developed and what they were like.

### Explore the Art

In this scene, Aztec teenagers attend a special school to learn about the Aztec way of life. What does this scene indicate about education in the Aztec Empire?

# The Early Americas



## California Standards

### History–Social Science

**7.7** Students compare and contrast the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the Meso-American and Andean civilizations.

### Analysis Skill

**HR 3** Distinguish relevant from irrelevant, essential from incidental, and verifiable from unverifiable information.

### English–Language Arts

**Writing 7.1.2** Support all statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts and statistics, and specific examples.

**Reading 7.2.6** Assess the adequacy, accuracy, and appropriateness of the author's evidence.

### FOCUS ON WRITING



**A Travel Brochure** Each year, millions of people visit the places you'll read about in this chapter. Try your hand at writing part of a brochure for a historical tour of the early Americas. As you read, you'll discover spots you won't want to miss.



### CHAPTER EVENTS

**c. 12,000–10,000 BC**

The first people arrive in the Americas.

**12,000 BC**

### WORLD EVENTS

**c. 5000 BC**

Irrigation is used in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

**History's Impact**▶ **video series**

Watch the video to understand the impact of Mayan achievements on math and astronomy.

**What You Will Learn...**

In this chapter you will learn about the development of civilization in the Americas. This photo shows the ruins of a great Maya temple in Tikal, Guatemala. More than 1,500 years ago the Maya built large cities in their American homeland.

**c. 3500 BC**

Maize is domesticated in Mesoamerica.

**c. 1200 BC**

The Olmec civilization begins in Mesoamerica.

**c. AD 200**

The Maya begin building large cities in the Americas.

**c. AD 900**

The Maya Classic Age ends.

**3000 BC****c. 3000 BC**

Egyptians begin to write using hieroglyphics.

**2000 BC****1000 BC****c. 500 BC**

Athens develops the world's first democracy.

**BC 1 AD****AD 1000****AD 476**

The Roman Empire falls.

Economics

Geography

Politics

Religion

Society  
and Culture

Science and  
Technology

**Focus on Themes** In this chapter, you will read about the development of civilizations in Mesoamerica, which is in the southern part of North America, and in the Andes, which is in South America. As you read about the Olmec and Maya

in Mesoamerica and Chavín in South America, you will see how the **geography** of the areas affected their way of life. You will learn that these ancient civilizations made interesting advancements in **science and technology**.

## Analyzing Historical Information

**Focus on Reading** History books are full of information. As you read, you are confronted with names, dates, places, terms, and descriptions on every page. Because you're faced with so much information, you don't want to have to deal with unimportant or untrue material in a history book.

**Identifying Relevant and Essential Information** Information in a history book should be

- relevant, or related to the topic you're studying.
- It should also be essential, or necessary, to understanding that topic. Anything that is not relevant or essential distracts from the important material you are studying.
- The passage below comes from an encyclopedia, but some irrelevant and nonessential information has been added so that you can learn to identify it.

### The Maya

**Who They Were** Maya were an American Indian people who developed a magnificent civilization in Mesoamerica, which is the southern part of North America. They built their largest cities between AD 250 and 900. Today, many people travel to Central America to see Maya ruins.

**Communication** The Maya developed an advanced form of writing that used many symbols. Our writing system uses 26 letters. They recorded information on large stone monuments. Some early civilizations drew pictures on cave walls. The Maya also made books of paper made from the fig tree bark. Fig trees need a lot of light.

*Portions of this text and the one on the next page were taken from the 2004 World Book Online Reference Center.*


The first sentence of the paragraph expresses the main idea. Anything that doesn't support this idea is nonessential.

This paragraph discusses Maya communication. Any other topics are irrelevant.

The last sentence does not support the main idea and is nonessential.

The needs of fig trees have nothing to do with Maya communication. This sentence is irrelevant.

Additional reading support can be found in the

**Interactive**  
  
**Reader and Study Guide**



**HSS Analysis HR 3** Distinguish relevant from irrelevant information.

**ELA 7.2.6** Assess the adequacy, accuracy, and appropriateness of the author's evidence.

## You Try It!

The following passage has some sentences that aren't important, necessary, or relevant. Read the passage and identify those sentences.

### The Maya Way of Life

**Religion** The Maya believed in many gods and goddesses. More than 160 gods and goddesses are named in a single Maya manuscript. Among the gods they worshipped were a corn god, a rain god, a sun god, and a moon goddess. The early Greeks also worshipped many gods and goddesses.

**Family and Social Structure** Whole families of Maya—including parents, children, and grandparents—lived together. Not many houses today could hold all those people. Each family member had tasks to do. Men and boys, for example, worked in the fields. Very few people are farmers today. Women and older girls made clothes and meals for the rest of the family. Now most people buy their clothes.

After you read the passage, answer the following questions.

1. Which sentence in the first paragraph is irrelevant to the topic? How can you tell?
2. Which three sentences in the second paragraph are not essential to learning about the Maya? Do those sentences belong in this passage?

# Key Terms and People

## Chapter 14

### Section 1

Mesoamerica (p. 384)

maize (p. 387)

### Section 2

obsidian (p. 390)

Pacal (p. 392)

### Section 3

observatories (p. 398)

Popol Vuh (p. 399)

## Academic Vocabulary

Success in school is related to knowing academic vocabulary—the words that are frequently used in school assignments and discussions. In this chapter, you will learn the following academic words:

rebel (p. 394)

aspects (p. 397)

As you read Chapter 14, notice how the writers have left out information that is not essential or relevant to what you are reading.

# Geography and Early Cultures

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. The geography of the Americas is varied with a wide range of landforms.
2. The first people to arrive in the Americas were hunter-gatherers.
3. The development of farming led to early settlements in the Americas.

### The Big Idea

The landforms and climate of the Americas affected farming and the development of early cultures.

### Key Terms

Mesoamerica, p. 384  
maize, p. 387

## If YOU were there...

You are a hunter-gatherer in North America. All of your life you have been moving south, following herds of animals. This year you have found a place where the climate is warmer and there are more kinds of plants to eat. Some people say this would be a good place to stay and make a permanent home. But others think you need to keep moving.

**Do you think your people should keep going or settle down in this new place? Why?**

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** The first people to arrive in the Americas were hunter-gatherers. Their ability to find food greatly depended on the geography of this new land.

## Geography of the Americas

Two continents—North America and South America—make up the region we call the Americas. These two continents have a wide range of landforms and climates.

The northern continent, North America, has high mountains, desert plateaus, grassy plains, and forests. Look at the map to find the location of some of these physical features. In the northern part of the continent, the climate is cold and icy. Temperatures get warmer toward the south.

In the southern part of North America lies Mesoamerica. **Mesoamerica** is a region that includes the southern part of what is now Mexico and parts of the northern countries of Central America. Steamy rain forests cover some of this region. In some places, volcanoes rise above the forest. Their activity over the years has made the surrounding soil very fertile. Fertile mountain valleys, rivers, and a warm climate make Mesoamerica good for farming. In fact, the first farmers in the Americas domesticated plants in Mesoamerica.



**HSS 7.7.1** Study the locations, landforms, and climates of Mexico, Central America, and South America and their effects on Mayan, Aztec, and Incan economies, trade, and development of urban societies.

# The Americas: Physical



In North America, long mountain ranges run from north to south, and rolling plains occupy the heart of the continent.

Mesoamerica has large areas of rain forest and a warm climate that is good for farming.

In South America, the Andes Mountains run along the western edge of the continent, and the Amazon Basin dominates the east.



ELEVATION	
Feet	Meters
13,120	4,000
6,560	2,000
1,640	500
656	200
(Sea level) 0	0 (Sea level)

## GEOGRAPHY SKILLS INTERPRETING MAPS

- 1. Location** Describe the relative location of Mesoamerica.
- 2. Place** What is the name of the large peninsula in eastern Mesoamerica?



Like North America, South America has many different kinds of landforms. The towering Andes Mountains run along the western shore of the continent. There, a narrow desert sits on the edge of rich fishing waters in the Pacific Ocean. East of the Andes lies the Amazon region—a huge, hot, and wet rain forest. The mighty Ama-

zon River drains this region. As you will see, the geography of the Americas played an important role in the development of early societies there.

**READING CHECK Comparing** What kinds of landforms and climates do North and South America have in common?

## The First People Arrive

No one is sure how the first people got to the Americas or when they arrived. Most historians think they came to North America from Asia by 12,000 BC. They probably walked across a land bridge that crossed the Bering Strait. A land bridge may have formed there during the ice ages when ocean levels dropped and exposed land.

Most scientists accept the theory of the land bridge to explain how the first people came to the Americas. But some scientists today are challenging that theory. They think the first Americans may have arrived even earlier—perhaps by sea.

Regardless of how they arrived, the first people to arrive in the Americas were hunter-gatherers. They hunted herds of large animals that wandered the land. These animals, including bison and huge woolly mammoths, provided their main food source. Early people also gathered fruits, nuts, and wild grains to eat. Early people didn't settle in one place very long, because they were always looking for food.

Eventually, some early people began to settle down. They formed small settlements on the coasts of North and South America, where they fished and gathered food. As populations grew, people started to experiment with seeds.

**READING CHECK Drawing Inferences** How do you think the geography of the Americas affected early peoples' search for food?



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

#### INTERPRETING MAPS

- Place** According to the map, from which continent did the first Americans come?
- Movement** The sea route runs along which American coast—east or west?

## Farming and Settlement

From their experiments with seeds, people eventually learned to farm. Farming allowed people to stop following animal herds and settle permanently in one place.

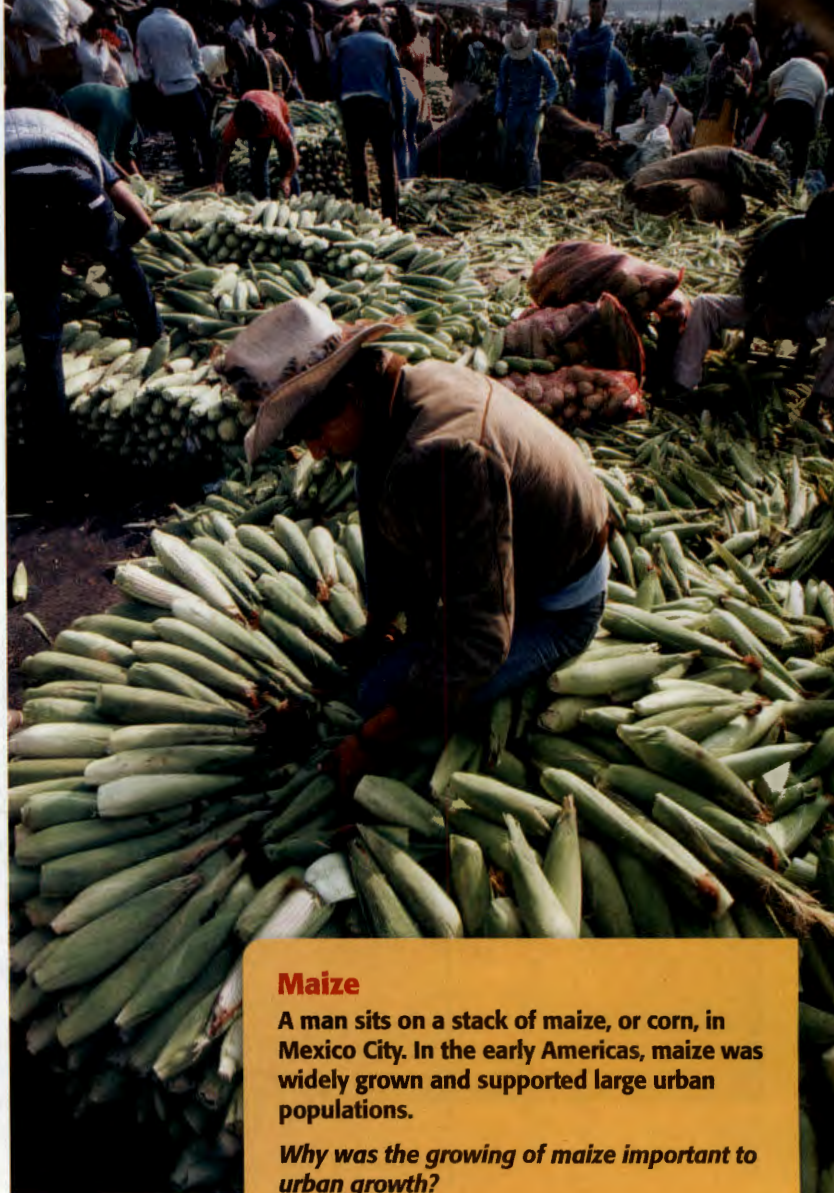
### First Farming Settlements

The first permanent farming settlements in the Americas appeared in Mesoamerica. This region had rich soils, warm temperatures, and plenty of rain. By 3500 BC people in Mesoamerica were growing **maize (MAYZ), or corn**. Later they learned to grow beans and squash. By growing these foods, settlements could support larger populations. More advanced societies grew, and people began to focus on activities such as building, trade, art, and organized religion. Eventually, settlements developed into towns and cities.

### The Olmec

The Olmec (OHL-mek) formed the first urban civilization in Mesoamerica around 1200 BC. Most Olmec lived in small villages, but some lived in larger towns. These towns were religious and government centers with temples and plazas. Impressive sculptures and buildings mark the Olmec as the first complex civilization in the Americas. They built the first pyramids in the Americas. They also made sculptures of huge stone heads. Each head probably represented a different Olmec ruler. Other sculptures, such as jaguars, probably represented Olmec gods.

Other factors that may mark the Olmec as a complex civilization are writing and scientific study. Some researchers think the Olmec may have developed the first writing system in the Americas. Scientists recently found an Olmec artifact with symbols that might be an early form of writing. The Olmec may have also had a calendar.



#### Maize

A man sits on a stack of maize, or corn, in Mexico City. In the early Americas, maize was widely grown and supported large urban populations.

*Why was the growing of maize important to urban growth?*

The Olmec civilization also had a large trading network. Villages traded with each other and with other peoples farther away. The Olmec may have even established a string of trading colonies along the Pacific coast. Through trade the Olmec got valuable goods such as the stones they used for building and sculpture.

Olmec civilization ended around 400 BC. By then trade had spread Olmec influence around Mesoamerica. Later peoples were able to build on their achievements. Some later peoples in Mesoamerica also followed some Olmec traditions.

**POINTS OF VIEW**

**Views of Writing**

Scientists have discovered an Olmec roller used for printing symbols. It may be evidence of the earliest writing system in the Americas. Some people don't believe the Olmec had a written language. Scientists disagree on what defines a written language. Some scientists think written language must include symbols that stand for sounds—not just for images.

“Even if you have symbols—like a light bulb in a cartoon—that's not writing.”

—David Grove,

Professor Emeritus of Anthropology,  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Other scientists think a system of symbols is a form of written communication. The symbols do not have to represent sound or spoken language. These scientists think written communication is the same thing as written language.

“We're not arguing that we have phonetics (sounds). But we say we do have logographs (symbols representing words), and we're arguing the Maya copied this. We have a system here that goes back to the Olmec.”

—Mary E. D. Pohl,

Professor of Anthropology, Florida State University



**ANALYSIS SKILL**

**ANALYZING POINTS OF VIEW**

Why might it be hard to define written language?

**Farming and the Growth of Other Civilizations**

Early civilizations also developed in other parts of the Americas. As in Mesoamerica, people in North and South America formed civilizations after they domesticated plants and learned how to farm.

About the time Mesoamericans started growing maize, South Americans in the Andes started growing potatoes. Later, maize farming spread south into the Andes from Mesoamerica. By about 2000 BC, South Americans were growing maize and beans as well as potatoes.

A number of small civilizations developed in South America, but the first major civilization began in the Andes. It is known

as the Chavín (chah-VEEN) culture, and it lasted from about 900 to 200 BC. Its city was a major religious and trading center. The Chavín culture is known for its woven textiles, carved stone monuments, and pottery shaped like animals and humans.

Several hundred years after farming began in South America, maize farming also spread north from Mesoamerica. People began growing maize in what is now the southwestern United States. The dry climate made farming difficult there, so people learned to choose fertile soils and use river water to irrigate their crops. Eventually maize became an important crop to people in the region. It was the main food of people in hundreds of small villages.

**FOCUS ON READING**

What is the purpose of this paragraph? Are any sentences irrelevant?

This Native American legend reveals the importance of maize, or corn:

“The breaths of the corn maidens blew rain-clouds from their homes in the Summer-land, and when the rains had passed away green corn plants grew everywhere the grains had been planted.”

—Zuni legend, quoted in *Kingdoms of Gold, Kingdoms of Jade* by Brian Fagan

The development of farming was important in the growth of civilizations all over the Americas. As with other peoples you have studied, a steady food supply led to population growth. Farming also encouraged people to establish permanent villages and cities.

**READING CHECK** **Finding Main Ideas** How did farming influence settlement patterns in the Americas?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** You have learned that geography affected settlement and farming in the Americas. Early civilizations, such as the Olmec and Chavín, developed there. In Section 2 you will learn about a later civilization influenced by the Olmec—the Maya.

## Early Civilizations in the Americas



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLS INTERPRETING MAPS

**Location** Which early civilization was located in Mesoamerica?

go.hrw.com  
Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SQ7 HP14

## Section 1 Assessment

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People **HSS** 7.7.1

- a. Recall** Where is Mesoamerica?

**b. Explain** In what ways is the geography of Mesoamerica good for agriculture?
- a. Identify** What landform do most scientists think the first people crossed to reach America?

**b. Make Inferences** Why do you think scientists aren't sure how the first people came to the Americas?
- a. Identify** What was the first crop domesticated in Mesoamerica?

**b. Predict** How might the Olmec civilization have influenced later civilizations in Mesoamerica?

### Critical Thinking

- Sequencing** Draw the graphic organizer below. Use it to show how the development of maize farming laid the foundation for cultural advances.



### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Taking Notes about Early Settlements in the Americas** Note where people first settled in the Americas. What sites would show how early hunter-gatherers and farmers lived? What geographical features are important to mention?

# The Maya

## If YOU were there...

You live in a village in the lowlands of Mesoamerica. Your family members have always been weavers, and now your aunts are teaching you to weave cloth from the cotton grown by nearby farmers. Traders from other areas often pass through your village. They tell wonderful stories about strange animals and sights they see in their travels. After talking to the traders who buy your cloth, you begin to think about becoming a trader, too.

## Why might you want to become a trader?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** Through trade, people get resources unavailable in their own natural environment. The natural environment, or geography, of Mesoamerica affected how a people called the Maya lived.

## Geography Affects Early Maya

The Maya (MY-uh) civilization developed in Mesoamerica. Early Maya lived in the lowlands of this region beginning around 1000 BC. Thick forests covered most of the land, so the Maya had to clear wooded areas for farmland. Like earlier Mesoamericans, the Maya grew maize and other crops.

Although the thick forests made farming hard, they provided valuable resources. Forest animals such as deer and monkeys were a source of food. In addition, trees and other plants made good building materials. For example, the Maya used wood poles and vines, along with mud, to build their houses.

The early Maya lived in small villages. Eventually these villages started trading with one another. They traded goods such as cloth and **obsidian**, a sharp, glasslike volcanic rock, that came from different parts of Mesoamerica. As trade helped support larger populations, villages grew. By about AD 200 the Maya were building large cities in the Americas.

**READING CHECK** **Finding Main Ideas** What were two ways in which the early Maya relied on their physical environment?

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. Geography affected early Maya civilization.
2. The Maya Classic Age was characterized by great cities, trade, and warfare.
3. Maya civilization declined, and historians have several theories as to why.

### The Big Idea

Maya civilization was characterized by great cities, trade, and warfare, but it disappeared for reasons that are still unclear.

## Key Terms and People

obsidian, p. 390

Pacal, p. 392



**HSS 7.7.1** Study the locations, landforms, and climates of Mexico, Central America, and South America and their effects on Mayan, Aztec, and Incan economies, trade, and development of urban societies.

**7.7.3** Explain how and where each empire arose and how the Aztec and Incan empires were defeated by the Spanish.

## Maya Classic Age

The Maya civilization reached its height between about AD 250 and 900. Historians call this period of Maya history the Classic Age. During the Classic Age, Maya civilization spread to the Yucatán Peninsula and grew to include more than 40 cities of 5,000 to 50,000 people each.

### Trade

Maya cities in the highlands traded with those in the lowlands. In this way people all over Maya territory got things that they didn't have nearby.

Look at the trade routes on the map to see the goods that were available in different areas of Mesoamerica. For example, the warm lowlands were good for growing cotton, rubber trees, and cacao (kuh-KOW) beans, the source of chocolate. Cacao beans had great value. Chocolate was known as the food of rulers and of the gods. The Maya even used cacao beans as money.

Lowland crops didn't grow well in the cool highlands. Instead, the highlands had valuable stones such as jade and obsidian. People carried these and other products along Maya trade routes.



## Cities

Maya cities had many grand buildings, including large stone pyramids, temples, and palaces. Some of these buildings honored local Maya kings. For example, in the city of Palenque (pah-LENG-kay), a temple honored the king **Pacal** (puh-KAHL). Pacal had the temple built to record his achievements as a ruler. Maya artists decorated temples and palaces with carvings and colorful paintings.

In addition to temples and palaces, the Maya also built structures to improve life in their cities. For example, builders paved large plazas for public gatherings, and they

built canals to control the flow of water through their cities. Farmers shaped nearby hillsides into flat terraces so they could grow crops on them.

Most Maya cities also had a special ball court. People played or watched a type of ball game in these large stone arenas. Using only their heads, shoulders, or hips, players tried to bounce a heavy, hard rubber ball through a stone ring above their heads. Players weren't allowed to use their hands or feet. The winners were awarded jewels and clothing. The losers were sometimes killed. This ball game was one that the Maya had picked up from Olmec traditions.

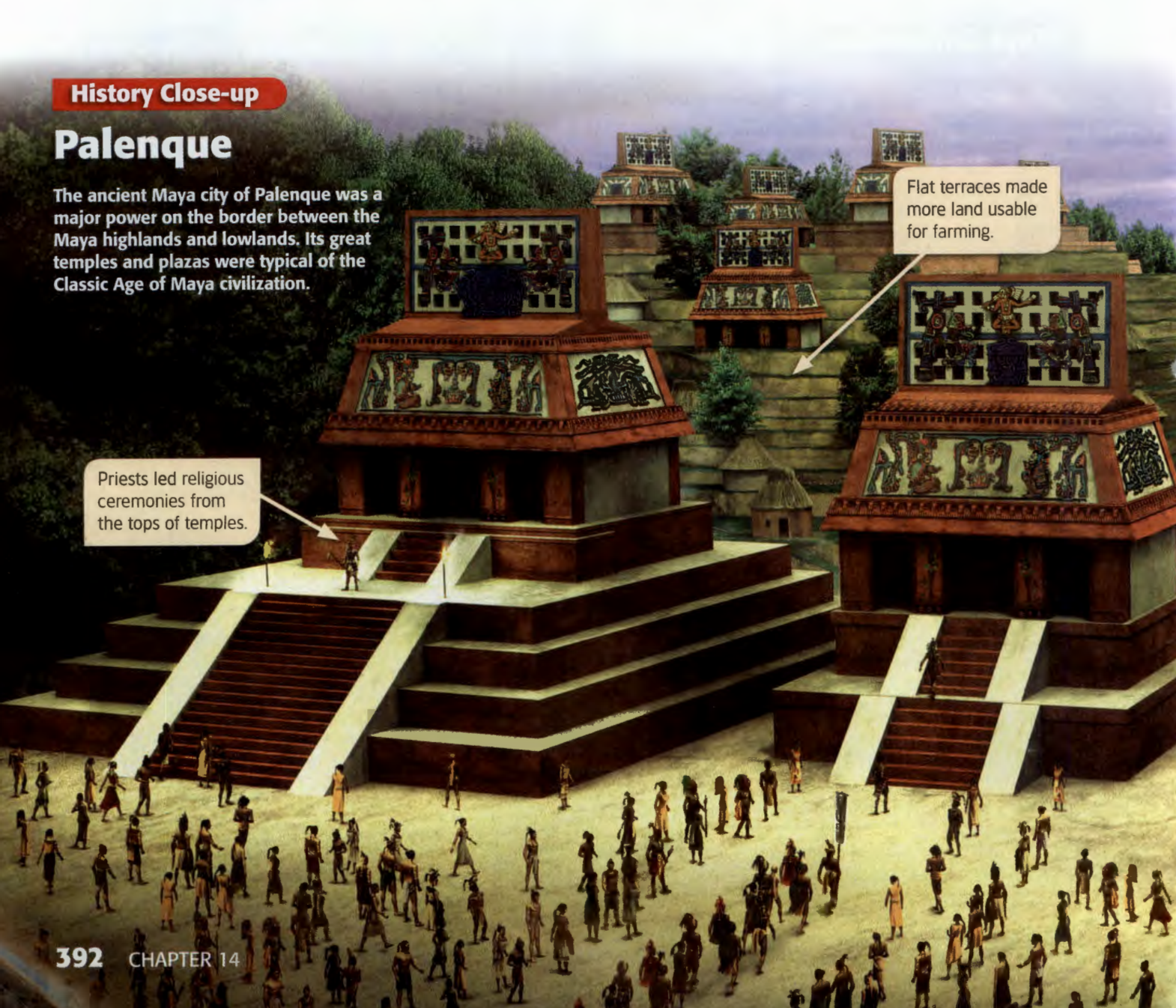
### History Close-up

## Palenque

The ancient Maya city of Palenque was a major power on the border between the Maya highlands and lowlands. Its great temples and plazas were typical of the Classic Age of Maya civilization.

Flat terraces made more land usable for farming.

Priests led religious ceremonies from the tops of temples.



The Maya cities were really city-states. Each had its own government and its own king. No single ruler united the many cities into one empire.

## Warfare

Conflicts between cities often led to fighting. Maya cities usually battled each other to gain power and land. For example, the city of Tikal (tee-KAHL) fought many battles with its rival Calakmul (kah-lahk-MOOL). Both cities wanted to control a smaller city that lay between them. Power shifted back and forth between the two larger cities for years.

Maya warfare was bloody. Warriors fought hand-to-hand using spears, flint knives, and wooden clubs. The Maya often captured enemy prisoners and killed them in religious ceremonies as a sacrifice to their gods. They burned enemy towns and villages. Warfare probably tore up the land and destroyed crops. Maya warfare was so destructive that some scholars think it may have contributed to the end of the Maya civilization.

**READING CHECK** Summarizing What were two ways Maya cities interacted with each other?

Maya temples were shaped like mountains, which the Maya considered sacred because they allowed people to approach the gods.



## BIOGRAPHY

### Pacal

603–683

Pacal became king of the Maya city of Palenque when he was just 12 years old. As king, Pacal led many important community events, such as religious dances and public meetings. When he died he was buried at the bottom of the pyramid-shaped Temple of the Inscriptions.

Maya buildings were covered with stucco and painted in bright colors.

**ANALYSIS SKILL**

## ANALYZING VISUALS

In what ways might Palenque's setting have helped the city? In what ways might it have hurt the city?



## Maya Civilization Declines

Maya civilization began to collapse in the 900s. People stopped building temples and other structures. They left the cities and moved back to the countryside. What caused this collapse? Historians aren't sure, but they do have some theories.

### THE IMPACT TODAY

Many Maya still live in villages throughout Mesoamerica. Others have moved to big cities.

One theory says that increased warfare brought about the end of the Maya Classic Age. A related theory is that, as cities grew, perhaps the Maya could not grow enough food to feed everyone. Growing the same crops year after year might have left the soil too weak for farming. As a result, competition between cities for land may have increased. This competition could have led to even more warfare than before. Increased warfare would have destroyed more crops and made farming more difficult.

Another possible cause of the decline of Maya civilization is the demands Maya kings made on their people. Kings forced people to build huge temples or farm for them. Maybe people didn't want to work for the kings. They might have **rebelled** or left the cities because of these demands.

### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**rebel** to fight against authority

Some historians also think climate might have played a role in the collapse of Maya civilization. Scientists have learned that the region suffered from a long dry period and droughts for about 150 years. This dry period took place about the time the Maya moved away from their cities. A drier climate and droughts would have made it hard to grow enough food to feed everyone in the cities.

Most researchers agree that there was probably no single event that caused the end of the Classic Age. More likely, a mix of several factors led to the decline of the Maya civilization.

**READING CHECK** **Drawing Inferences** Why do you think scientists aren't sure what caused the end of Maya civilization?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** You have learned that the Maya built a great civilization, but it collapsed for what were probably several reasons. In Section 3 you will learn more about what Maya life and society was like at its height.

## Section 2 Assessment

go.hrw.com

Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SQ7 HP14

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People **HSS** 7.7.1, 7.7.3

- a. Recall** What resources did the Maya get from the forest?

**b. Make Inferences** How might the Maya have used **obsidian**?
- a. Identify** Who was an important king of Palenque?

**b. Make Generalizations** Why did Maya cities fight each other?
- a. Describe** What happened to Maya civilization in the 900s?

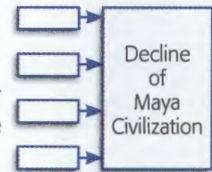
**b. Analyze** In what way did growth of cities, warfare, and drought possibly affect Maya civilization?

**c. Elaborate** What might scientists study to find out about the end of Maya civilization?

### Critical Thinking

- Identifying Cause and Effect**

Draw a diagram like the one to the right. Use it to show four possible causes for the decline of the Classic Age in Maya civilization.



### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Gathering Information about the Maya** Much of the tour would likely be devoted to the Maya. Use the maps and pictures in this chapter to help you choose which places to write about. What areas and features of each site would you point out? What would you say about the history of these different places?

# Maya Life and Society

## If YOU were there...

You are a Maya farmer, growing corn on a farm near the city. Often you enter the city to join the crowd at a religious ceremony. You watch the king and his priests, standing at the top of a tall pyramid. They wear capes of brightly colored feathers and many heavy gold ornaments that glitter like the sun. As the king offers a sacrifice to the gods, a ray of sun strikes the pyramid.

**How do these ceremonies make you feel about your king?**

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** Fancy clothes and important responsibilities showed the role kings and priests played in Maya society. The roles people played determined what their daily life was like.

## Roles in Maya Society

Maya society had a complex class structure. As you might expect, life for the upper social classes differed greatly from life for the lower classes.

### Upper Class

The upper class of Maya society included different groups of people. The king held the highest position in society. Priests, warriors, and merchants were also part of the upper class.

Maya society had a rigid class structure.

An attendant brings gifts to two Maya rulers.



## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. Roles in Maya society were based on a complex class structure.
2. Religion in Maya society was often bloody.
3. The Maya made achievements in art, science, math, and writing.

### The Big Idea

People played different roles in Maya society, but together they made great achievements in art, science, math, and writing.

## Key Terms

observatories, p. 398  
Popol Vuh, p. 399



**HSS 7.7.2** Study the roles of people in each society, including class structures, family life, warfare, religious beliefs and practices, and slavery.

**7.7.4** Describe the artistic and oral traditions and architecture in the three civilizations.

**7.7.5** Describe the Meso-American achievements in astronomy and mathematics, including the development of the calendar and the Meso-American knowledge of seasonal changes to the civilizations' agricultural systems.

The Maya believed their rulers were related to the gods. For this reason, rulers were often involved in religious ceremonies. They also led battles. As the richest people in Maya society, rulers had beautiful clothing and jewelry. Kings wore huge feather headdresses and capes of cotton, jaguar skins, and feathers.

Priests were usually born into their role in Maya society. They led religious ceremonies. They were also the most educated people. Priests used their knowledge of astronomy and math to plan the best times for religious ceremonies.

Professional warriors fought battles against other Maya cities. In battle, these warriors wore animal headdresses, jade jewelry, and jaguar-skin capes. They painted their bodies red and black.

Merchants directed trade among the cities. They organized the transportation and distribution of goods. They also supervised the people who carried goods between cities. Together, the members of the upper class controlled the politics, religion, and economy in Maya society.

### Lower Classes

Although the upper classes had the most power, most Maya belonged to the lower classes as farming families. These Maya lived in small houses outside the cities. Girls learned from their mothers how to cook, make yarn, and weave. Women cared for children. Men crafted household tools such as knives. They had to provide food for their family, so they also spent a lot of time hunting and farming. They kept small gardens next to their houses and worked together to farm larger fields.

Farmers had to give some of their crops to their rulers. Lower-class Maya also had to “pay” their rulers with goods such as cloth and salt. They had to work on building temples, palaces, and other buildings.

They also had to serve in the army during times of war. If captured in battle, a lower-class man usually became a slave.

Slaves held the lowest position in society. Orphans, slaves’ children, and people who owed money also became slaves. Slaves had to carry trade goods between cities. They also served upper-class Maya by working as farmers or household servants.

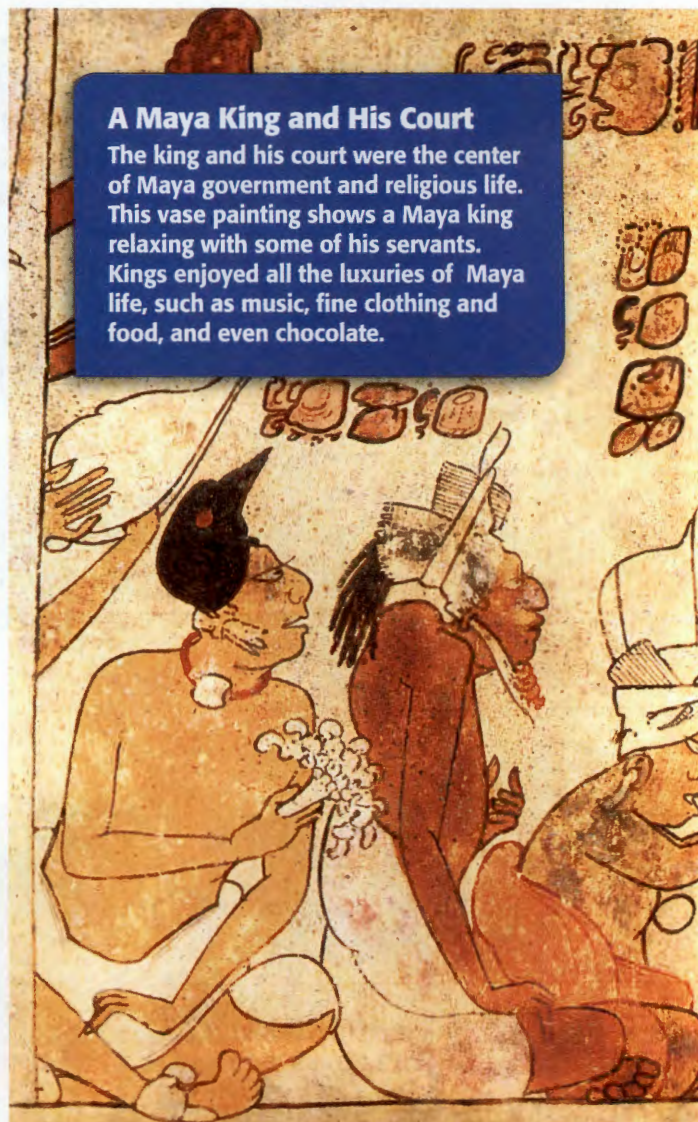
The lower class supported the upper class with food and labor, but the upper class also helped the lower class. For example, upper-class Maya led the religious ceremonies that were vital to daily life for all classes of society.

### READING CHECK Identifying Cause and Effect

How might one become a slave in Maya society?

#### A Maya King and His Court

The king and his court were the center of Maya government and religious life. This vase painting shows a Maya king relaxing with some of his servants. Kings enjoyed all the luxuries of Maya life, such as music, fine clothing and food, and even chocolate.



## Religion

The Maya worshipped many gods related to different **aspects** of their daily life. The most important god was the creator. This god would take many different forms. Others included a sun god, moon goddess, and maize god. The Maya believed their kings communicated with the gods.

According to Maya beliefs, the gods could be helpful or harmful, so people tried to please the gods to get their help. The Maya believed their gods needed blood to prevent disasters or the end of the world. Every person offered blood to the gods by piercing their tongue or skin. The Maya sometimes held special ceremonies to give blood at events such as births, weddings, and funerals.

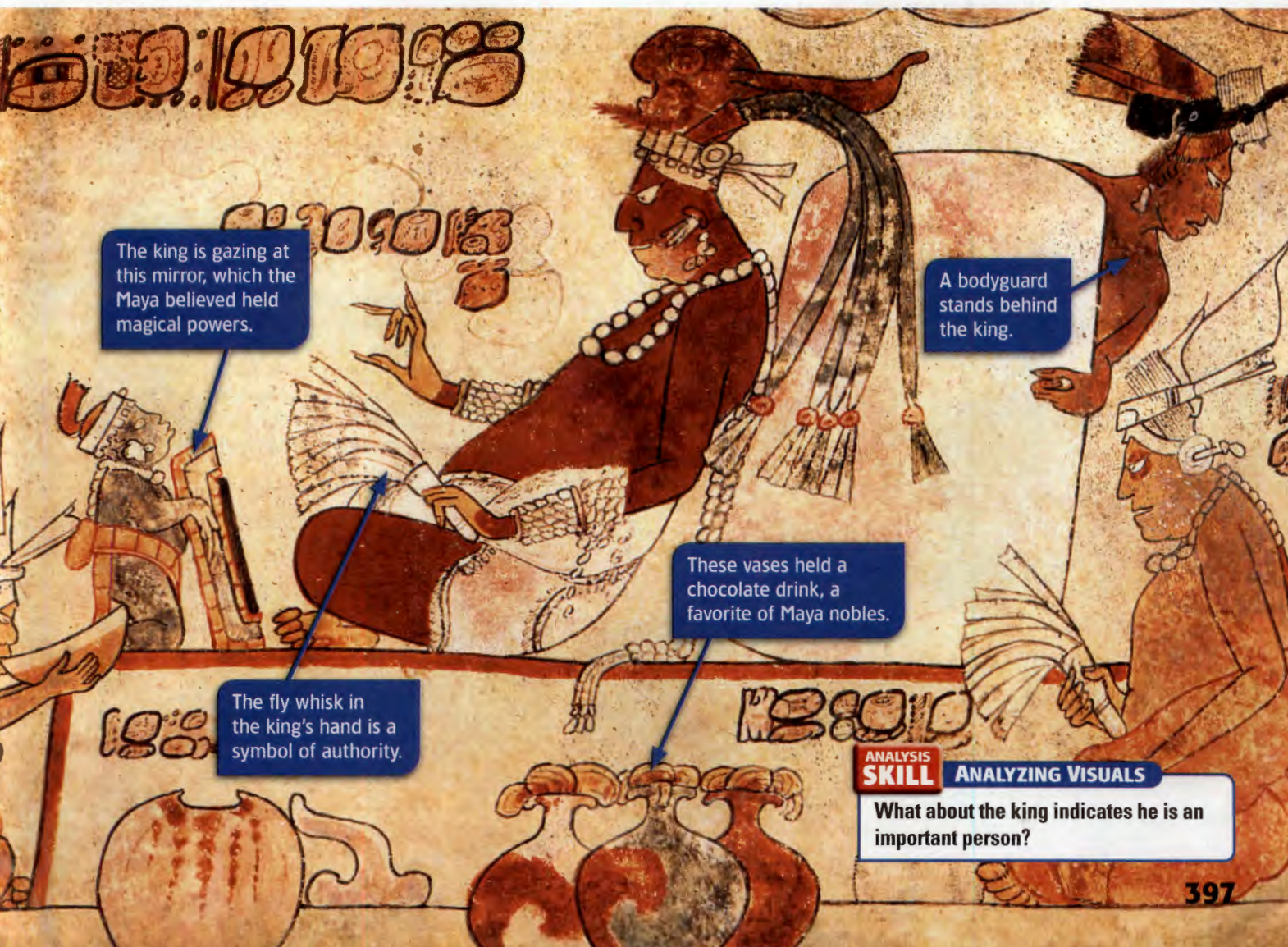
On special occasions the Maya believed they needed extra amounts of blood. On these occasions they made human sacrifices to their gods. They usually used prisoners captured in battle for this ritual. A priest would offer human hearts to stone carvings of gods. These sacrifices usually took place at a temple.

**ACADEMIC VOCABULARY**  
aspects parts

**READING CHECK** **Generalizing** Why did the Maya want to please their gods?

## Achievements

The Maya's many artistic and architectural skills are reflected in their sculpture and in their temples. Maya achievements also included discoveries in science and math, as well as developments in writing.



## Art and Architecture

Some of the best-known Maya art is their sculpture and their jade and gold jewelry. They carved stone sculptures of kings or gods for their cities.

Maya cities showed the talent of their architects and builders. The Maya built cities without using metal tools. They didn't even have wheeled vehicles to carry supplies. Instead, workers used obsidian tools to cut limestone into blocks. Then, to move the giant blocks, workers rolled them over logs and lifted them with ropes. It took many workers to build Maya cities, perhaps the most recognizable Maya achievement.

## Science and Math

Maya achievements in science and math were just as important as their achievements in art and architecture. The Maya built **observatories, or buildings to study astronomy**, so their priests could study the stars. Maya astronomers figured out that a year is about 365 days long. They also learned about the cycles of the moon and how to predict eclipses.

Partly based on their discoveries in astronomy, the Maya developed calendars. They had a religious calendar to plan religious events. The Maya used a different calendar for agriculture. It had symbols for different months tied to farming activities such as planting or harvesting. These activities matched changes in the seasons. The Maya calendar was more accurate than the calendar used in Europe at that time.

To go along with their calendars, the Maya created a number system that included some new concepts in math. For example, the Maya were among the first people with a symbol for zero. The Maya used their number system to record important dates in their history.

## Writing and Oral Traditions

The Maya also developed a writing system. It was similar to Egyptian hieroglyphics. Symbols represented both objects and sounds. The Maya created records, especially about achievements of their kings, by carving symbols into large stone tablets. They also wrote in bark-paper books.

### Maya Astronomy and Calendars



This photo shows the observatory at the Maya city of Chichén Itzá. The diagram shows the Maya religious and farming calendars. The Maya used these two calendars together to coordinate planting, harvesting, and important religious events.



## Primary Source

### ART

## A Maya Carving

This carving comes from the palace at Yaxchilán (yahsh-chee-LAHN). The Maya recorded historical events on carvings like this one. Historians can now translate most Maya writing. They study the pictures and writings to learn about events in Maya history.

October 28,  
AD 709



She is letting blood.



Lady Xoc



Lord of  
Yaxchilán



### ANALYSIS SKILL

#### ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

Who are the people in this carving?

Stories and poetry got passed down orally from one generation to the next. After the Spanish arrived, **Maya legends and history were written in a book called the Popol Vuh** (poh-pohl VOO). This book provides valuable information about the Maya.

**READING CHECK** Analyzing What activities did the Maya calendar regulate?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** The Maya had a complex social structure. They also made achievements in art and learning. They left behind many records of their society and history. In the next chapter you will learn about two great empires that developed later in the Americas—the Aztecs and Incas.

## Section 3 Assessment

go.hrw.com  
**Online Quiz**

KEYWORD: SQ7 HP14

### Reviewing Ideas and Terms HSS 7.7.2, 7.7.4, 7.7.5

- a. Identify** Who were members of the upper class in Maya society?

**b. Explain** In what ways did lower-class Maya support upper-class Maya?
- a. Describe** What did the Maya do to try to please their gods?

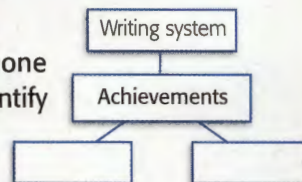
**b. Explain** Why did the Maya practice human sacrifice?
- a. Recall** What did the Maya study from observatories?

**b. Rank** What do you think was the most impressive Maya achievement?

### Critical Thinking

#### 4. Analyzing Information

Draw a diagram like the one to the right. Use it to identify some major achievements of the Maya.



### FOCUS ON WRITING

#### 5. Identifying Key Details about Maya Culture

Some sites might have displays of Maya art and tools. There could even be scenes and live performances of how the Maya lived. Make a list of what the people on the tour might see of Maya culture.

# from the Popol Vuh

translated by Dennis Tedlock

## GUIDED READING

### WORD HELP

**disintegrating** breaking apart

**mason** one who works with stone or brick

**dismantled** took apart

❶ *Why do the gods wish to make human beings?*

❷ *What do the gods use to make the body? What happens to it?*

**About the Reading** *In the language of the Maya, Popol Vuh means "Council Book." This work contains both the myths and the history of a group of Maya. It was first used by Maya kings and lords to help them govern their people. Today, the Popol Vuh helps modern readers understand how the Maya lived and what they believed. The following myth, for example, tells us how the gods tried to create people several times before they eventually succeeded.*

**AS YOU READ** Pay close attention to the behavior of the creator-gods.

Again there comes an experiment with the human work, the human design, by the Maker, Modeler, Bearer, Begetter:

"It must simply be tried again. The time for the planting and dawn-ing is nearing. For this we must make a provider and nurturer. ❶ How else can we be invoked and remembered on the face of the earth? We have already made our first try at our work and design, but it turned out that they didn't keep our days, nor did they glorify us."

"So now let's try to make a giver of praise, giver of respect, provid-er, nurturer," they said.

So then comes the building and working with earth and mud. They made a body, but it didn't look good to them. It was just separ-at-ing, just crumbling, just loosening, just softening, just disintegrating, and just dissolving. ❷ Its head wouldn't turn, either. Its face was just lopsided, its face was just twisted. It couldn't look around. It talked at first, but senselessly. It was quickly dissolving in the water.

"It won't last," the mason and sculptor said then. "It seems to be dwindling away, so let it just dwindle. It can't walk and it can't multi-ply, so let it be merely a thought," they said.

So then they dismantled, again they brought down their work and design. Again they talked:

"What is there for us to make that would turn out well, that would succeed in keeping our days and praying to us?" they said. Then they planned again . . .



**ELA Reading 7.3.2** Identify events that advance the plot and determine how each event explains past or present action(s) or foreshadows future action(s).

*The creator-gods try again. This time, they produce a group of wooden creatures called "manikins."*

They came into being, they multiplied, they had daughters, they had sons, these manikins, woodcarvings. But there was nothing in their hearts and nothing in their minds, no memory of their mason and builder. They just went and walked wherever they wanted. They did not remember the Heart of Sky. **3**

And so they fell, just an experiment and just a cutout for humankind.

They were not competent, nor did they speak before the builder and sculptor who made them and brought them forth, and so they were killed, done in by a flood:

There came a rain of resin from the sky.

There came the one named Gouger of Faces: he gouged out their eyeballs.

There came Sudden Bloodletter: he snapped off their heads.

There came Crunching Jaguar: he ate their flesh.

There came Tearing Jaguar: he tore them open.

They were pounded down to the bones and tendons, smashed and pulverized even to the bones . . . **4**

Such was the scattering of the human work, the human design. The people were ground down, overthrown. The mouths and faces of all of them were destroyed and crushed. And it used to be said that the monkeys in the forests today are a sign of this. They were left as a sign because wood alone was used for their flesh by the builder and sculptor.

**5** And so this is why monkeys look like people: they are a sign of a previous human work, human design—mere manikins, mere woodcarvings.



Monkeys were common subjects in Maya carvings.

## GUIDED READING

### WORD HELP

**competent** capable; fit  
**resin** a gooey substance that comes from trees  
**pulverized** crushed

**3** The Heart of Sky is the father-god of the Maya.

**4** *In your own words, explain what happened to the creatures.*

**5** *This myth explains the origin, or beginning, of what animal?*

## CONNECTING LITERATURE TO HISTORY

**1. Evaluating** According to Maya beliefs, the gods could be helpful or harmful, so people tried to please the gods to get their help. Are the gods in this myth helpful or harmful? Explain your answer.

**2. Analyzing** By studying Maya records, archaeologists are learning about the achievements of the Maya. What have you learned about the Maya by reading this "record" of their life and society?





Analysis

Critical Thinking

Participation

Study

## Accepting Social Responsibility

### Understand the Skill

“No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” The great English poet John Donne made this observation almost 400 years ago. It is a famous quotation that remains as true today as when Donne wrote it. It means that no one exists alone. We are all members of society—“a part of the main.”

Donne’s poem continues, “If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less.” This was Donne’s way of saying that a society’s strength depends on the contributions of its members. They must be willing to fulfill their roles in that society and to do what is best for it.

### Learn the Skill

As a member of society, you have obligations to the people around you. The most obvious obligation is to do nothing that might harm society. This duty can range from small things, such as not littering, to large things, such as not committing a crime.

In addition, you have a duty to participate in society. At the very least, this means using the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. These responsibilities include being informed about important issues in your school, community, and country. Later, when you are older, they will also include serving on juries and voting in elections.

Another level of social responsibility and participation is becoming involved in change to benefit society. It goes beyond just being informed about issues to trying to do something about them. Before you take this important step, however, here are some points to consider.

- 1 Few changes that benefit society will have everyone’s support. Some people always want things to stay the same. They may get upset or treat you badly if you work for change. You must be prepared for this possibility if you decide to take action.
- 2 Sometimes efforts to improve things involve opposing laws or rules that you believe need to be changed. No matter how just your cause is, if you break laws or rules, you must be willing to accept the consequences of your behavior.
- 3 Remember that violence is *never* an acceptable method for change. People who use force in seeking change are not behaving in a socially responsible manner, even if their cause is good.

### Practice and Apply the Skill

Review the “If You Were There” scene in Section 3. Imagine yourself as that Maya farmer. You respect your king as the leader of your city and its army. War is very important in your culture. Your city is at war nearly all the time, and you feel this fighting is hurting your society. Farming is difficult because farmers must spend so much time in the army. In addition, enemy attacks destroy the crops farmers are able to grow. Food shortages are common.

1. If you did something to try to end the warfare, in what ways might that benefit your society?
2. Why might some people oppose your efforts?
3. What might the consequences be for you if you refuse to fight?
4. If you were this Maya farmer, what would you do? Explain your answer.

## Visual Summary

Use the visual summary below to help you review the main ideas of the chapter.

**QUICK  
FACTS**



People arrived in the Americas sometime before 10,000 BC.

By 2500 BC people in Mesoamerica had domesticated maize.

The Maya built cities in the Americas during their Classic Age.

The Maya civilization eventually collapsed, but no one knows why.

## Reviewing Vocabulary, Terms, and People

Imagine that these terms from the chapter are correct answers to six items in a crossword puzzle. Write the six clues for the answers. Then make the puzzle with some answers written down and some across.

1. Mesoamerica
2. Pacal
3. obsidian
4. observatories
5. maize
6. Popol Vuh

## Comprehension and Critical Thinking

### SECTION 1 (Pages 384–389) HSS 7.7.1

7. a. **Identify** What plants did early farmers in Mesoamerica grow for food? What plants did farmers grow in South America?

b. **Make Inferences** What do Olmec towns, sculptures, and other items tell us about Olmec society?

c. **Evaluate** Evaluate this statement: “Global temperature change had a big impact on the history of the Americas.”

### SECTION 2 (Pages 390–394) HSS 7.7.1, 7.7.3

8. a. **Recall** What were two important trade goods for the early Maya?
- b. **Analyze** Why did the Maya civilization decline?
- c. **Elaborate** For which people in Maya society was life probably pleasant and secure? For which people was life less pleasant or secure?

### SECTION 3 (Pages 395–399) HSS 7.7.2, 7.7.4, 7.7.5

9. a. **Describe** What are some things that happened during Maya religious ceremonies?
- b. **Contrast** How did daily life for the upper and lower classes of Maya society differ?
- c. **Evaluate** Of the Maya’s many achievements, which do you think is the most important? Why?

## Reviewing Themes

- 10. Science and Technology** Do you agree or disagree with this statement: “The Maya were clever and talented because they built their cities without the help of metal tools or wheeled vehicles.” Why?
- 11. Geography** How did geography play a role in the Maya economy?

## Using the Internet

go.hrw.com  
KEYWORD: SQ7 WH14

- 12. Activity: Understanding Maya Math** The ancient Maya invented a number system that helped them construct buildings and keep track of their agriculture and commerce. Number glyphs are mostly simple dots and lines. The Maya also used head glyphs, which are more intricate drawings for numbers. Enter the activity keyword. Then visit the Web sites and complete some math problems using Maya numbers.

## Reading and Analysis Skills

**Analyzing Information** In each of the following passages, one underlined selection is irrelevant or nonessential to the meaning of the sentence, or it cannot be verified as true. Identify the irrelevant, nonessential, or unverifiable selection in each sentence.

- 13.** Pacal was greatly honored by the Maya. He was very tall. The Maya built a great temple to record his achievements.
- 14.** Ball games were popular in Maya cities. Players could not use their hands or feet to touch the ball. The Maya would not enjoy modern basketball very much.
- 15.** Chocolate was valuable in Maya society. Only rulers and gods could have chocolate. Today, many people enjoy chocolate every day.

- 16.** The Maya developed an accurate calendar system. They knew that a year had 365 days. The ancient Romans also had a calendar. The Maya calendar used symbols to represent months.
- 17.** Mesoamerica is largely covered by rain forests. Many kinds of plants and animals live in rain forests. The people of Mesoamerica probably liked to watch monkeys playing in the trees.

## Social Studies Skills

### 18. Accepting Responsibility and Consequences

Organize your class into groups. Choose one member of your group to represent the ruler of a Maya city. The rest of the group will be his or her advisers. As a group, decide how you will behave toward other cities. Will you go to war, or will you trade? Once you have made your decisions, declare your intentions to other cities. Ask the representatives of those cities how they will respond to your action. As a class, discuss the consequences of the actions you have chosen to take.

## FOCUS ON WRITING



- 19. Writing Your Brochure** Travel brochures often feature exciting descriptions of tours. Use your notes to help you write such a description for a historical tour of the ancient Americas.

Choose sites from the most ancient ones to the Maya cities. For each site, write several sentences about the people who lived there. You might tell how they came to live there or how an object there played a part in their lives.

Most travel brochures show lots of pictures. What pictures would you choose to go with what you've written?

# Standards Assessment

**DIRECTIONS:** Read each question, and write the letter of the best response.

- 1** Use the map to answer the following question.



Which of the areas on the map shows the location of the Maya civilization?

- A J
  - B K
  - C L
  - D M
- 2** Mesoamerica contains all of the following geographic features *except*
- A mountains.
  - B rain forests.
  - C deserts.
  - D rivers.
- 3** Which word *best* describes the Maya civilization during its Classic Age?
- A peaceful
  - B religious
  - C united
  - D democratic

- 4** Despite their accomplishments, the Maya did *not* have

- A a reliable calendar.
- B wheeled vehicles.
- C a writing system.
- D knowledge of mathematics.

- 5** Which class of people held the lowest position in Maya society?

- A priests
- B farmers
- C slaves
- D merchants

## Connecting with Past Learnings

- 6** In this chapter you read that Maya civilization during the Classic Age included independent city-states. What other civilization that you have studied was organized into city-states?

- A ancient Greece
- B ancient Persia
- C Han China
- D the Roman Empire

- 7** The Maya believed their rulers were related to the gods. What other ancient civilization believed the same thing?

- A Jews
- B Indians
- C Phoenicians
- D Egyptians