

The Inca: A lost society

Topic: Inca culture and society

Aims:

- To develop students' ability to take information from a text and form their own opinions about it
- To develop students' ability to deduce the meaning of words in a text

Level: Intermediate and above

Introduction

During this lesson students will read and discuss the content of a text about the Inca. The lesson has been designed to be as communicative as possible, so that students work collaboratively to extract meaning from the text and apply their own opinions to the content of the text.

There are some suggested follow up tasks at the end.

Procedure

Pre reading task:

- Put up the word 'Inca' on the board (or if you can find some, put up related pictures) and ask the students what they already know about the subject.

Reading task:

- Put the students into groups of five and give each one a part of the text from **Worksheet A** to read.
- Once they have read their part of the text ask the students to work together as a group and put the parts of the text into the correct order.
- Do some quick feedback to make sure they have the correct order and ask them how they knew the order.
- Give the students the definitions from **Worksheet B** on strips of paper (you'll need to copy one set of definitions for each group) and get each student to find the definitions that match to the words in **bold** in their text.

Tip: It may be better not to do feedback after this activity, as the students may change their minds about the definitions as the lesson progresses and they start to understand more about the text. In this way they will have the chance to self-correct.

Answers:

Word	Definition
existence (noun)	the state of being
empire (noun)	a group of countries controlled by a single power
spanned (verb)	to cover an area
ethnic (adjective)	of a racial group
brutal (adjective)	cruel and violent
arms (noun)	weapons (i.e. knives, guns etc.)
craftsmen (noun)	people who make things with their hands
textiles (noun)	clothes or other articles made of cloth
assimilated (verb)	to allow one group of people to become part of another
set about (phrasal verb)	begin
looting and plundering (gerund)	to steal articles during time of war or disorder
torn down (phrasal verb)	to destroy
site (noun)	a position or place
temple (noun)	a religious building
memorial (noun)	something that reminds people of a person or event

- Give the students out **Worksheet C** and ask them to read the text again and put the facts under the correct heading in the table.

Tip: At this point you can either give the students one complete text each to do on their own **OR** you can get them to continue to work as a group.

Answers:

The Inca Empire	Inca society	The Conquistadors	Machu Picchu
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 million people • an army 40,000 men • capital city Cuzco in Peru • covered an area of 2,500 miles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a small ethnic group • didn't know about the wheel • had no written language • very good at making things • very tolerant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an army of less than 400 men • arrived in 1532 • brought many diseases • brutal conquerors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a religious place • close to the Urubamba River in Peru • discovered in 1911

- Once they have finished you can clarify their answers to the grouping task and to the vocabulary matching.

Post reading discussion task:

- Give each student a copy of **Worksheet D** and ask them to complete the sentences about the text.

Tip: Here you might need to stress that there is no correct / incorrect answer. They should complete the sentences according to their own opinion.

- The part of the text that most surprised me was...
- I think the conquistadors were able to defeat the Inca army because...
- I think the descendants of the Inca are / aren't entitled to compensation because...
- I think the conquistadors tore down the Inca buildings and built their own because...
- I think Machu Picchu wasn't discovered by the conquistadors because...
- I think the best thing about the Inca was...
- I would / wouldn't like to go to Machu Picchu because...

- After they have completed the sentences they should compare and discuss them in small groups or as a whole class. You could also offer your own opinions.

Possible follow ups:

- Take away the original text and ask students to write their own text based upon the notes from the table in Worksheet C.
- Ask the students to write some questions about other things they would like to know about Incas, their culture and society, then send them to a library or the Internet to try to discover more.
- Read out the vocabulary words and ask students to decide how many syllables each word has and which syllable is stressed.

Answers:

	syllables	stressed
existence	3	2 nd
empire	2	1 st
spanned	1	
ethnic	2	1 st
brutal	2	1 st
arms	1	
craftsmen	2	1 st
textiles	2	1 st
assimilated	5	2 nd
set about	3	3 rd
looting	2	1 st
plundering	3	1 st
torn down	2	2 nd
site	1	
temple	2	1 st
memorial	4	2 nd

Text:

How is it that a people who had no written language and didn't even know of the **existence** of the wheel could within the space of a hundred years build an **empire** that **spanned** some 2,500 miles across South America?

The people I'm referring to are of course the Inca. The Inca were a small **ethnic** group who came to rule an empire of more than 12 million people. They ruled their empire from Cuzco in Peru and were not the **brutal** conquerors that many think them to be. They took control of other cultures through a mixture **arms** and gifts. They were skilled **craftsmen** who were able to produce beautiful jewelry and **textiles**. Many villagers were so impressed by them that they thought of them as gods. The Inca were in many ways very tolerant and **assimilated** new peoples, their cultures and even their religions into their own, but not so the Spanish conquistadors who arrived in 1532.

With an army of less than 400 men they were able to defeat the 40,000 strong Inca army and they soon **set about looting and plundering** the riches of the Inca culture. Most of the amazing architecture and complex building they had worked to build up was **torn down** and made into palaces and fortresses for the conquering Spanish.

Amazingly, one Inca **site** remained undiscovered until 1911. It was the amazing Machu Picchu, the Inca **temple** to the sun, but by this time of course the Inca were long gone, either killed off by conquistadors or the diseases that they brought with them. Today it still stands, at the top a mountain beside the Urubamba River in Peru, a **memorial** to the greatness of a people that we can now only read about in books.

Links to related BBC articles:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1880611.stm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1403740.stm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/586810.stm>

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