

The Mayan Civilization

TERMS & NAMES

Maya
maize
stele
glyph
codex

Build on What You Know You have learned that the Olmec influenced other cultures. Now you'll read about one of them, the Maya, who built a powerful civilization in Mesoamerica.

The Rise of the Maya

1 ESSENTIAL QUESTION Where did Mayan civilization rise?

As the Olmec declined, the **Maya** began to develop a civilization from present-day southern Mexico into northern Central America. This area included the lowlands in the north, the dry forests of the Yucatán Peninsula, and the dense jungles of present-day Mexico and Guatemala. The area also included the highlands in the south. This is a range of cool mountains stretching from southern Mexico to El Salvador.

Early Settlements By about 1500 B.C., people speaking Mayan languages first began settling lowland villages, where they farmed and traded. The first ceremonial centers, where the Maya practiced their religion, appeared in wealthier villages by 500 B.C. Eventually, these villages developed into cities.

Tikal The pyramid shown here is the Temple of the Jaguar. It stands in Tikal, one of the great Mayan cities. ▼





Classic Period Recent findings may cause the dates to change, but the period from A.D. 250 to 900 is traditionally known as the Classic Period of Mayan civilization. During this period, the Maya built magnificent city-states with temples, pyramids, and plazas.

Some of the largest city-states included Tikal (tee•KAHL), Copán (koh•PAHN), and Palenque. (You read about Palenque and some of its kings in *Starting with a Story* on page 286.) Each city-state was independent and was ruled by a king. However, the cities were linked through trade. Cities traded local products, such as salt, textiles, and jade.

REVIEW How did the Maya develop into a great civilization?

Mayan Life

2 ESSENTIAL QUESTION How was Mayan society structured?

Thousands of people lived in the city-states. Over time, a clear social structure developed. The Mayan king was at the top of this structure, followed by the noble class, made up of priests and leading warriors. Merchants and artisans came next, followed by farmers and then slaves. Slaves were mostly prisoners captured during wars.

Daily Life Most of the Mayan people lived and worked as farmers. They grew beans, squash, and **maize** (mayz), a type of corn. This corn crop was important to the Maya. In fact, according to Mayan legends, people had been created out of maize.

Mayan farmers used a variety of agricultural techniques, including irrigation. To irrigate dry areas, they dug canals that carried water to their fields. They also added rich soil from the canal beds to their fields to lift them above river level. To keep their families dry when the rivers flooded, the farmers built their houses on poles that raised the houses above the ground.

In contrast with the farmers, members of the noble class lived in decorated stone palaces. The Mayan nobles and their children wore beautiful clothes and jade beads.

P Primary Source Handbook

See the excerpt from the *Popol Vuh*, page R44.

Religious Beliefs Mayan life was shaped by religion. The Maya prayed to many gods. Their supreme god was the lord of fire. Other gods included the god of the sun, goddess of the moon, and the gods of death, war, corn, and rain.

To gain favor with their gods, the Maya made offerings of animals, plants, and jade. Sometimes they even made human sacrifices. In most large cities, the Maya also played a ritual ball game on a huge court. One of the reasons the Maya played this game is because they believed it would bring life-giving rains. You will learn more about the Mayan ball game in the Daily Life feature on pages 312–313.

Stele This carved stone slab of a Mayan ruler stands in a ceremonial center at Copán. Artistic expression in Copán reached its height during the reign of this ruler. ▼

REVIEW How was Mayan life shaped by religion?

Mayan Culture

3 **ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What were Mayan achievements in art and learning?

Mayan art and learning were also linked to religion. Art was produced for religious ceremonies. Religious beliefs led to the development of the calendar and to advances in mathematics and astronomy.

Art Mesoamerica's tropical climate long ago rotted Mayan art made of wood, bark, feather, and gourds. Only pottery, sculpture, jade work, and **steles** (STEE•leez)—carved stone slabs—have survived. Steles were used to mark special religious dates and celebrate a ruler's reign.



Abandoned Cities By 900, the Maya had abandoned their great cities. To this day, no one knows why. Warfare, which broke out in the 700s, may have caused a decline. Overcrowding and overfarming may have led to food shortages. When Spanish conquerors arrived in the 1500s, only small, weak city-states remained. However, Mayan peoples still live in Mesoamerica. Many of them still speak the Mayan languages, as well as Spanish.

REVIEW How were art and learning linked to religion?

Lesson Summary

- The Maya built magnificent cities.
- A clear class structure developed in the Mayan civilization.
- The Maya created lasting artworks, invented a writing system, and made great advances in astronomy and mathematics.

Why It Matters Now . . .

The influence of Mayan culture is found in the United States as a result of immigration from Mesoamerica.



Connect to Today

▲ **Maya Today** The modern-day descendants of the ancient Maya follow many traditional practices. For example, these women carry corn much like their ancestors did.

4 Lesson Review

Terms & Names

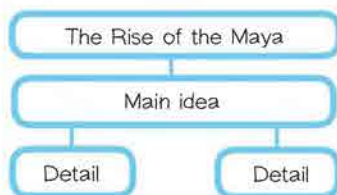
1. Explain the importance of

Maya	stele	codex
maize	glyph	

Using Your Notes

Summarizing Use your completed diagram to answer the following question:

2. What is the main idea of the section "Mayan Life"?



Activity

Internet Activity Use the Internet to learn more about the Mayan calendar. Create a poster with pictures and captions that shows how the Mayan system worked.

INTERNET KEYWORD *Mayan calendar*



Main Ideas

3. What happened during the Classic Period in Mayan civilization?
4. Who belonged to the main classes in Mayan society?
5. Why did the Maya develop a calendar?

Critical Thinking

6. **Understanding Cause and Effect** Why do you think archaeologists were able to find many Mayan steles?
7. **Comparing and Contrasting** How did the Olmec influence Mayan culture and religion?

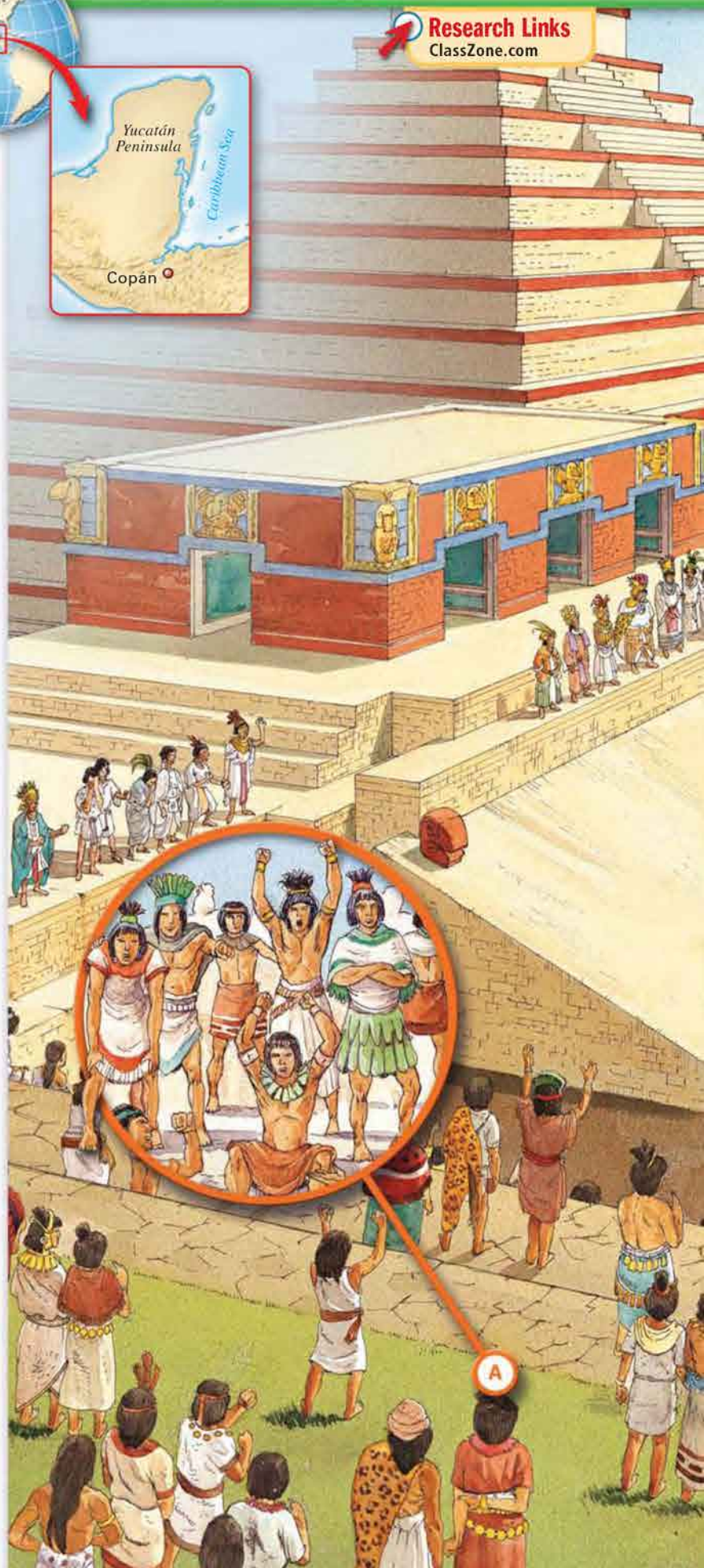


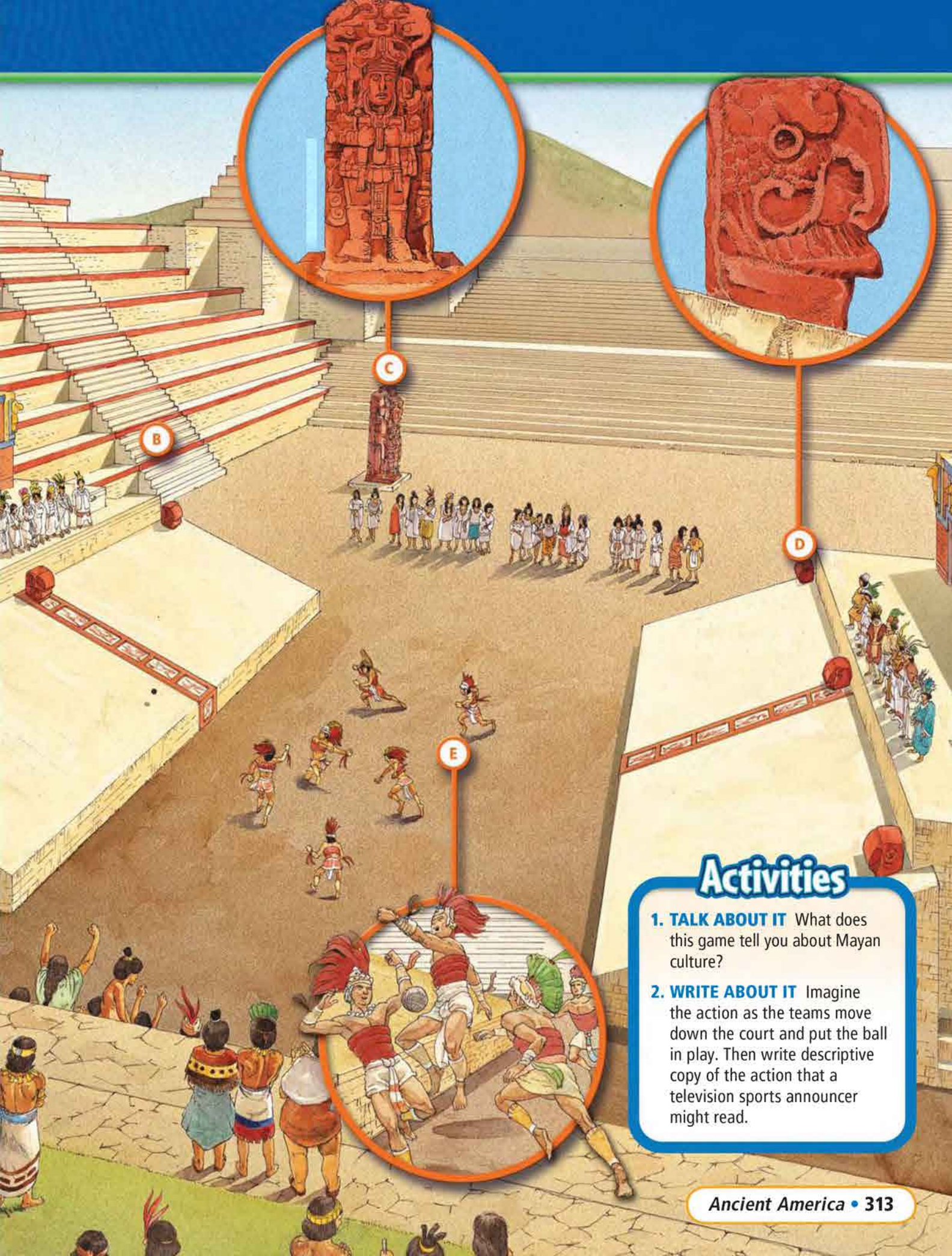
Playing the Mayan Ball Game

Purpose: To learn about the rules and risks of the Mayan ball game

Ball courts, like this one in Copán, were found in every major Mayan city-state. Most players belonged to the noble class and considered it a great honor to play the Mayan ball game. But the stakes were high. The Maya believed that the gods rewarded the winning team's city with fertile soil and plentiful crops. However, the captain of the losing team was often sacrificed to the gods. Here are some typical features of the Mayan ball game.

- A Spectators** People crowded along the walls above the court to cheer on their team and favorite players.
- B Temple** At the end of the game, the captain of the losing team followed the priest up the staircase to the temple and accepted his fate.
- C Steles** The glyphs on the steles were meant to inspire the home team. They celebrated the city's king and the team's great victories.
- D Goal** It is thought that to win the game, players had to bounce the ball off of carved parrot heads set about 20 to 30 feet off the ground along the court. But this could take hours or even days.
- E Players** Players could not touch the ball with their hands or feet. They could only hit the solid, eight-pound rubber ball with their hips, knees, and elbows. Even though players wore heavy padding, they often got hurt.





Activities

- 1. TALK ABOUT IT** What does this game tell you about Mayan culture?
- 2. WRITE ABOUT IT** Imagine the action as the teams move down the court and put the ball in play. Then write descriptive copy of the action that a television sports announcer might read.

Chapter 9 Review

VISUAL SUMMARY

Ancient America

Geography

- The Andes provided a harsh environment for the Chavín, Nazca, and Moche civilizations.
- The Olmec and Maya lived in fertile land in Mesoamerica.



Culture

- Trade helped spread Olmec culture throughout Mesoamerica.
- Ancient Americans left behind beautiful carvings, pottery, and textiles.
- The Maya built pyramids and temples in their great city-states.



Science and Technology

- The Moche created irrigation systems.
- The Maya developed a calendar and the concept of zero.



TERMS & NAMES

Explain why the words in each set below are linked with each other.

1. **tropical** and **slash-and-burn agriculture**
2. **Nazca** and **aquifer**
3. **Olmec** and **mother culture**
4. **glyph** and **codex**

MAIN IDEAS

The Geography of the Americas (pages 288–293)

5. How did civilizations in the Americas arise in difficult environments?
6. Name some geographical differences between the Andes and Mesoamerica.

Ancient Andean Civilizations (pages 294–299)

7. How were art and religion linked in the Chavín and Nazca cultures?
8. How have archaeologists learned about the Chavín, Nazca, and Moche?

The Olmec of Mesoamerica (pages 300–305)

9. What was the importance of discovering ruins in San Lorenzo and La Venta?
10. What aspects of the Olmec civilization influenced other cultures?

The Mayan Civilization (pages 306–313)

11. Describe the geography of the area where Mayan civilization rose.
12. What artistic and architectural traditions did the Maya develop?

CRITICAL THINKING

BIG IDEAS: Science and Technology

13. **MAKING INFERENCES** What innovations of the early Andean cultures probably helped later civilizations survive?
14. **UNDERSTANDING CAUSE AND EFFECT** How did religious practices in ancient America lead to developments in science?
15. **EVALUATING INFORMATION** How did the development of the concept of zero help the Maya calculate numbers?

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

1. WRITING ACTIVITY Imagine that you have just flown over and discovered the Nazca Lines. Write a letter to a friend describing them and telling what you think they were used for.

2. INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITY—MATHEMATICS Learn about the symbols the Maya used in their number system. Then use the symbols to write a few simple addition problems.

3. STARTING WITH A STORY

Review the news feature you wrote about the ceremony in Palenque. Use the feature to write a brief scene about what happened after the ceremony. Create dialogue and interesting characters to make the scene come alive.

Technology Activity**4. WRITING A VIDEO SCRIPT**

Use the Internet or the library to find out about the hardships archaeologists and explorers suffered to uncover information about the Maya. Then work with a group of classmates to write a video script for a documentary about the explorers.

- Include interviews with the archaeologists and explorers.
- Write a dramatic scene describing their struggles.
- Use maps and pictures to help illustrate the geography of Mesoamerica.



Research Links
ClassZone.com

Interpreting Visuals Use this Mayan clay figure of a warrior to answer these questions.



1. What class in Mayan society did warriors belong to?

- A. nobles
- B. merchants
- C. farmers
- D. slaves

2. Which of the following indicates this warrior's class?

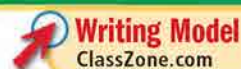
- A. his modest appearance
- B. his frightened expression
- C. his humble pose
- D. his clothing and jewelry



Test Practice
ClassZone.com

Additional Test Practice, pp. 51–533

Writing About History



Expository Writing: Comparison and Contrast

Two Ancient Civilizations

Purpose: To write a composition comparing and contrasting life in ancient India or China to life in the Americas

Audience: Your classmates

You just read about three ancient civilizations that developed over 3,000 years. How can you get a good understanding of the main ideas from such a long span of history? One way is to organize the information by similarities and differences. When you write an essay about similarities and differences, you are writing a type of expository composition called **comparison and contrast**.



▲ Hindu temple and pyramid in Tikal

Organization & Focus

Your assignment is to write a 500- to 700-word expository essay that compares and contrasts ancient Asian and American civilizations. Focus on just one aspect of life so that you can cover it thoroughly.

Choosing a Topic Study the Visual Summaries on pages 246, 282, and 314, and look for topics to compare and contrast. For example, the visual summaries of the three chapters group information by the themes of this book: Geography, Culture, Economics, Government, Belief Systems, and Science & Technology. By using one of the themes, you can compare and contrast an aspect of life in two cultures.

Identifying Purpose and Audience Your communication purpose in this assignment is to compare and contrast, and your audience is your classmates. However, there is another useful purpose for writing this essay. It will help you to review and draw meaning from the unit.

Finding Details Reread all the information in this unit about your topic. Take notes about important details. After you finish your notes, look for details that are similar and those that are different across the two cultures.

Outlining and Drafting You might organize and present your ideas in one of three possible ways, as the chart above right shows.

Ways to Organize Comparison and Contrast Details

Point by Point	Whole by Whole	Similarities & Differences
Presents one aspect at a time, showing both comparisons (similarities) and contrasts (differences)	Presents each subject as a whole, pointing out comparisons and contrasts during the presentation of the second subject	Presents the similarities together and the differences together
Example:	Example:	Example:
1) Goods traded in China; goods traded in the Americas (how they were alike and different)	1) Trade in China (the goods traded and the effect of trade on the rest of the culture)	1) Trade in China and the Americas were alike in these ways.
2) Effect of trade on Chinese culture; effect of trade on ancient American cultures (how they were alike and different)	2) Trade in ancient America (the goods traded and the effect of trade on the rest of the culture, with references back to the first section using phrases such as "Unlike Chinese trade" or "As in China")	2) Trade in China and the Americas were different in these ways.

Decide which order works best for your topic and create an outline for your essay. Follow your outline as you draft your essay. Be sure to use transitions that highlight the comparisons, such as *for example*, *in addition*, and the contrasts, such as *however*, *on the other hand*, and *unlike*.



Research & Technology

As you draft your essay, you may need additional information. One good source would be an encyclopedia, either online or in print. Articles in the same encyclopedia often cover the same general topics for each civilization. That will help you to compare and contrast.



Technology Tip Make the settings in your word processor for margins, tabs, and spacing match the form your school requires. These settings are usually found in the Format menu.



Evaluation & Revision

When you have finished your first draft, put it aside for a day. Then read it as if you had never read it before, to see what might still need work. In particular, check the organization of ideas within and between paragraphs. Make revisions until you are satisfied.



Self-Check

Does my essay have

- ☐ a clear focus?
- ☐ a formal introduction?
- ☐ supporting evidence of similarities and differences?
- ☐ transitions that show comparisons and contrasts?
- ☐ a strong conclusion?



Publish & Present

Make a neat final copy of your essay that conforms to your school's guidelines. Share it with your classmates and take turns reading and commenting on each other's work.