

## Aztec Empire Classroom Activity

The Classroom Activity introduces students to the context of a performance task, so they are not disadvantaged in demonstrating the skills the task intends to assess. Contextual elements include: an understanding of the setting or situation in which the task is placed, potentially unfamiliar concepts that are associated with the scenario, and **key terms** or vocabulary students will need to understand in order to meaningfully engage with and complete the performance task. The Classroom Activity is also intended to generate student interest in further exploration of the key idea(s). The Classroom Activity should be easy to implement with clear instructions.

Please read through the entire Classroom Activity before beginning the activity with students to ensure any classroom preparation can be completed in advance.

Throughout the activity it is permissible to pause and ask students if they have any questions.

### Resources Needed:

- Chart paper, projector, whiteboard, or a chalkboard
- Marker or chalk
- One piece of paper and pencil for one student in each group. Students who need an accommodation may use their preferred tool for writing.
- Some method of displaying ancillary material<sup>1</sup>

### Learning Goal:

- Students will understand the context of the key concepts related to the topic:
  - The Aztec Empire was a very modern civilization for its time that consisted of large cities, technological advancements, and cultural traditions.

Students will understand the following key term:

- **Civilization:** a nation or group of people who have reached an advanced state of human society in which a high level of culture, science, government, technology, and industry has been reached.

Note: This definition is provided here for the convenience of facilitators. Students are expected to understand this key term in the context of the task, not memorize the definition.

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<sup>1</sup> Facilitators can decide whether they want to display ancillary materials using an overhead projector or computer/Smartboard, or whether they want to produce them as a handout for students.

## Aztec Empire Classroom Activity

**[Purpose:** The facilitator’s goal is to help students understand the key term, “civilization,” and that the Aztec Empire was very advanced for its time.]

[Divide the students into small groups\* and give each group a number. Assign one student to be the recorder for the group. Give this student a pencil and a sheet of blank paper. Write the following on the board: “Civilization: a nation or group of people who have reached an advanced state of human society in which a high level of culture, science, government, technology, and industry has been reached.” Below the definition, display the following question for the students: “What are some examples of elements that make up our modern day civilization in terms of culture, science, government, and technology/industry?”]

[\*Note: The following section can be modified to accommodate various teacher-student interaction types such as a teacher-led discussion with the entire class, teacher-student discussion for remote locations with a single student, or small groups.]

**Facilitator says:** “In preparation for your performance task, you need to understand the term ‘Civilization.’ A civilization is a nation or group of people who have reached an advanced state of human society in which a high level of culture, science, government, technology, and industry has been reached. You have been provided with one sheet of paper and a pencil for your group recorder. With your group, take four minutes to discuss the following question: What are some examples of our modern day civilization in terms of culture, science, government, technology, and industry? Be sure to indicate which part of modern day civilization your example connects to.”

[Students discuss in their group for four minutes. While students are discussing, circulate around the room encouraging students to stay on task.]

**Facilitator says:** “Now that you have generated some ideas on this topic, nominate one of your group members to come up\* to the board and write one of your examples under the original question. Even numbered group members will come up first. When the even numbered group member finishes putting an example on the board, he or she will pass the marker/chalk to an odd numbered group member who will then add to the list on the board. Repeat this process until your group runs out of ideas from the list. If your group has a similar idea to one that is already written on the board, you can put a check mark next to that idea that shows the similarity.”

[\*Note: For students with physical disabilities, allow them to use their preferred response mode.]

[Allows students around 3–5 minutes to add ideas to the board. When the activity is complete, take two minutes to review the list with the students; be sure to read each example out loud to the students.]

**Facilitator says:** “Examine this list. Is there anything else you want to add?”

[Allow about one minute for extra student responses. You can also take this time to add anything from the list below to the student answers.]

### **Possible class discussion answers (unscripted):**

- Cities (industry)
- Roads (industry/government)
- Computers/Internet (technology)
- Laws (government)
- Museums (culture/science)
- Art (culture)

- Books (culture)
- Music (culture)
- Movies/Television (technology)
- Buildings (industry)
- Homes (industry)
- Cars (technology/industry)
- Schools (government/culture)
- Stores (industry/culture)
- Cellphones or communication (technology)

**Facilitator says:** “So far, we have been discussing what makes up our modern civilization. Your performance tasks will deal with different aspects of the Aztec Empire.”

[Display **Ancillary Image 1.**]

**Facilitator says:** “Here is an artist’s illustration of the ancient Aztec city of Tenochtitlan [Teh - NOTCH - tit- lahn]. In the picture, there are several large buildings and some roads running alongside. You can also see a group of people gathered outside the largest building, as well as some sort of engraving on the sidewall. Based on what you know about our modern civilization, what do you think these buildings, roads, and engravings are used for? What are the mass of people doing?”

[Choose some students to answer the question. Take around two minutes to have the student(s) provide their answer.]

**Possible class discussion answers (unscripted):**

- Buildings: shelter? temple?
- Roads: footpaths?
- Engravings on the sides of walls (Art? Ceremonial? Language?)
- Large group of people in front of the large building (Possibly an army? Organized meeting? Rally? A protest?)

**Facilitator says:** “To finish our discussion, take three minutes to discuss with your group the following question: Using this picture and the list you made on the board of examples from our modern day culture, science, government, technology, and industry, which of these modern day examples did the ancient Aztec society possess? Have a member of your group take notes on your discussion for the whole class discussion.”

[Give students three minutes to discuss and take notes for the whole class discussion. While students are discussing, circulate around the room encouraging students to stay on task.]

**Facilitator says:** “Let’s begin our discussion. Please raise your hand and I will call on you.”

[Choose some students to answer the question. Take around two minutes to have the student(s) justify their answer(s).]

**Possible class discussion answers (unscripted):**

- Cities
- Roads
- Laws
- Art
- Writing
- Buildings
- Homes
- Stores



**Facilitator says:** “As you can gather from the image, the Aztec civilization had ancient versions of several things we have in modern civilization. They had a large city, huge buildings, building technology, roads, art, armies, and laws.”

**Facilitator says:** “You will learn more about the Aztec Empire in the performance task you will be completing. Remember that a civilization is a nation or group of people who have reached an advanced state of human society in which a high level of culture, science, government, technology, and industry have been reached. Also remember that the Aztec Empire is considered to be a very modern civilization for its time. You are now ready to complete your performance task. Please, leave your recorded notes and pencils behind to be collected.”

Ancillary Material

Image 1



Picture Description: Image 1 is a picture of an Aztec city. There is a large triangular building. The bottom of this building is a square. There is a group of people standing in front of this building. There are some smaller buildings with drawings on sides of them. There are walkway areas that appear to be made of bricks. There is a fence like structure with a building just inside of the fence with a few people nearby.

Credit: Interfoto/SuperStock