



Seventh Grade Social Studies



**There will be a short video lesson of a Knox County teacher to accompany this task available on the KCS YouTube Channel and KCS TV.*

7th Grade Social Studies Task 3

Age of Exploration: The Defeat of the Aztecs and Incas

Standards:

7.62 Describe how the Aztec and Inca empires were eventually defeated by Spanish Conquistadors (i.e., Hernan Cortes and Francisco Pizarro).

Resources and Materials:

- Aztec Reading
- Inca Reading
- Aztec and Inca Task sheet
- Pencil, Pen, highlighter
- KCS@home Summer video

Background:

Many of you have learned about various explorers. In this lesson you will learn how explorers known as conquistadors defeated the indigenous civilizations known as the Aztec and Incas.

Activities:

1. Watch the section of the video on the Aztecs to create background knowledge.
2. Watch the section of the video for gathering evidence and annotating a text.
3. Annotate along with the teacher on your Aztec reading.
4. Watch the section of the video on the Incas to create background knowledge.
5. Watch the section of the video that explains how to complete the two task questions.

The Aztecs Background

Tenochtitlán was founded in 1325 A.D. by a wandering tribe of hunters and gatherers on islands in Lake Texcoco, near the present site of Mexico City. In only one century, this civilization grew into the Aztec empire, largely because of its advanced system of agriculture. The empire came to dominate central Mexico and by the ascendance of Montezuma II in 1502. At the time, the empire was held together primarily by Aztec military strength, and Montezuma II set about establishing a government system.

Conquistadors (Cortez) background:

Cortez, a conquistador from Spain, visited the coast of Yucatan Peninsula and in March 1519 landed at Tabasco in Mexico's Bay of Campeche with 500 soldiers, 100 sailors, and 16 horses. There, he won over the local Indians gaining their trust and friendship and developed many allies who were enemies of the Aztec people.

Conquistadors (Cortez) and Aztecs Collide

Meanwhile, at Veracruz, Cortés trained his army and then burned his ships to ensure loyalty to his plans for conquest. Having learned of political strife in the Aztec empire, Cortés led his force into the Mexican interior. On the way to Tenochtitlán, he clashed with local Indians, but many of these people, including the nation of Tlaxcala, became his allies after learning of his plan to conquer their hated Aztec rulers. Hearing of the approach of Cortés, with his frightful horses and sophisticated weapons, Montezuma II tried to buy him off, but Cortés would not be dissuaded. On November 8, 1519, the Spaniards and their 1,000 Tlaxcaltec warriors were allowed to enter Tenochtitlán unopposed.

Montezuma suspected them to be divine envoys of the god Quetzalcatl, who was prophesied to return from the east in a "One Reed" year, which was 1519 on the Aztec calendar. The Spaniards were greeted with great honor, and Cortés seized the opportunity, taking Montezuma hostage so that he might govern the empire through him.

Another aid in the defeat of the Aztecs was the introduction of a new disease known as smallpox. Aztec Native's didn't have any natural immunities to the disease as a result, it killed out thousands and weakened many others giving Spanish Conquistadors an advantage over the Aztecs As a result, Cortez overthrew the wealthy Aztec Empire claiming it in honor of the Spanish King. This wealth and prosperity would increase the thirst for exploration throughout Europe.

The Incas Background

The Inca first appeared in the Andes region during the 12th century A.D. and gradually built a massive kingdom through the military strength of their emperors. The Inca state spanned the distance of northern Ecuador to central Chile and consisted of 12 million inhabitants from more than 100 different ethnic groups at its peak. Well-devised agricultural and roadway systems, along with a centralized religion and language, helped maintain a cohesive state.

Francisco Pizarro Background

Francisco Pizarro was an explorer, soldier, and conquistador. He was born around 1474 in Trujillo, Spain. As a soldier, he served on the 1513 expedition of Vasco Núñez de Balboa, during which he discovered the Pacific Ocean.

Francisco Pizarro traps Incan emperor Atahualpa

Pizarro's timing for conquest was perfect. By 1532, the Inca Empire was embroiled in a civil war that had decimated the population and divided the people's loyalties. Atahualpa, the younger son of former Incan ruler Huayna Capac, had just deposed his half-brother Huascar and was in the midst of reuniting his kingdom when Pizarro arrived in 1531. On his way to the Incan capital, Pizarro learned of the war and began recruiting soldiers still loyal to Huascar.

Pizarro met Atahualpa just outside Cajamarca, a small Incan town in the valley of the Andes. Sending his brother Hernan as an envoy, Pizarro invited Atahualpa back to Cajamarca for a feast in honor of Atahualpa's claim to the throne. Though he had nearly 80,000 soldiers with him in the mountains, Atahualpa attended the feast with only 5,000 unarmed men. He was met by Vicente de Valverde, a friar traveling with Pizarro. While Pizarro's men lay in wait, Valverde urged Atahualpa to convert to Christianity. Atahualpa angrily refused, prompting Valverde to give the signal for Pizarro to open fire. Trapped, the panicking Incan soldiers made easy prey for the Spanish. Pizarro's men slaughtered the 5,000 Incans in just an hour. Pizarro himself suffered the only Spanish injury: a cut on his hand sustained as he saved Atahualpa from death.

Realizing Atahualpa was initially more valuable alive than dead, Pizarro kept the emperor in captivity while he made plans to take over his empire. In response, Atahualpa offered Pizarro a room full of gold and silver in exchange for his freedom. Pizarro consented, but after receiving the ransom, Pizarro brought Atahualpa up on charges of starting a rebellion. By that time, Atahualpa had played his part in pacifying the Incas while Pizarro secured his power, and Pizarro considered him disposable. Atahualpa was to be burned at the stake—but at the last moment, Valverde offered the emperor freedom if he would convert. Atahualpa submitted, only to be executed by strangulation. The day was August 29, 1533.

