



Name _____

Second Passage

Directions: Read the following passage. Use information from the passage to answer the questions that follow.

The Aztecs by Jesse McDermott

In the twelfth century, a group of people now called the Aztecs entered the Valley of Mexico. They built one of the largest cities of the ancient world and started a civilization with advanced forms of art, religion, and warfare. Today, the Aztecs are known for their warlike behavior, but their culture was remarkable in other ways too.

The Aztecs were the last of a wave of invaders to come to the Valley. They were poor, and the inhabitants of the area did not welcome them. The Aztecs wandered the deserts to the north of the Valley of Mexico and the Valley itself for more than a hundred years. Finally, the Aztecs settled on a small, rocky island in Lake Texcoco. The year was A.D. 1325, and the long journey of the Aztecs was finally over as they began building a city.

The city was called *Tenochtitlan*, and it would become the capital of a vast Aztec Empire. When they first began building the city, the Aztecs were faced with many challenges. They had to build the city on the swamps and marshes of the shallow Lake Texcoco. The Aztecs also needed to figure out a way to farm. To solve these problems, they created *chinampas*—rafts made from branches and covered with reeds and mud from the lake’s bottom. One of the benefits of *chinampas* was that the mud used was very fertile. It was perfect for growing beans and maize, or corn—the principal foods of the native peoples of the Americas.

As Tenochtitlan grew, three wide bridges, or causeways, were built to connect it to the mainland. Aqueducts were used to transport fresh water to the city for irrigation. A system of canals allowed the people to travel from one part of the city to another by canoe.



Over time, Tenochtitlan grew into a large, beautiful, and highly organized city. It spanned more than five square miles and was inhabited by more than 300,000 people. There were palaces, a royal zoo, and a large open-air marketplace. Here, as many as 25,000 people would gather to buy and sell all kinds of foods and goods. At the center of Tenochtitlan was the Temple Precinct, which was the political and spiritual center of the Aztec Empire.

By the 1440s, the Aztecs controlled the entire Valley of Mexico. This was accomplished through both warfare and a kind of diplomacy. As the Aztecs had a fierce reputation in battle, they were able to convince some of the neighboring lords to serve Tenochtitlan rather than face its warriors. The Aztecs even formed an alliance with two powerful neighboring cities. Together, the “Triple Alliance” began campaigns to conquer the regions surrounding the Valley of Mexico. The Aztecs collected an annual tribute, consisting of food, textiles, and precious materials, from the people living in the lands they conquered.

There was more to Aztec life than warfare, though. From an early age, children learned to farm. Boys also began to learn their father’s craft or trade. Girls learned from their mothers how to weave and work in the house. At age twelve, children left home to attend school.

The Aztecs had an advanced culture. One of their most remarkable achievements was the creation of an accurate calendar system. The Aztecs actually had two calendars. The first was the civil calendar, which was used to track the seasons and seasonal events such as planting and harvesting. The second was the religious calendar, used only by the priests. Every 52 years, the first day of both calendars was the same. This marked the beginning of a new cycle. When this happened, the Aztecs celebrated with a great festival.

The Aztec Empire amazed Spanish foreigners when they came to the area in 1519. One explorer reported, “All about us we saw great cities and villages built in the water, their great towers and buildings of masonry rising out of it. When I beheld the scenes around me, I thought within myself, this was the garden of the world.”



Comprehension

Directions: Read the questions below and choose the best answer.

1. Which sentence **best** states the central idea of the passage?
 - a. The Aztecs were a resourceful people with an interesting culture.
 - b. Today the Aztecs are known mostly for their warlike behavior.
 - c. The Aztecs thrived because of their alliances with surrounding peoples.
 - d. After years of wandering, the Aztecs built the city of Tenochtitlan.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Informational Text 2. Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.



2. Part A

Which word **best** describes the relationship between the different peoples living in the Valley of Mexico? Write an X on the line beside your answer.

- _____ peaceful
- _____ hostile
- _____ indifferent
- _____ competitive

Part B

Find **two** sentences in the passage with details that support your response to Part A. Write those **2** sentences on the lines below.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Informational Text 1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.



3. What is the author’s primary purpose in writing “The Aztecs”?
- a. to persuade readers that the Aztecs were ahead of their time
 - b. to entertain readers with the story of how Tenochtitlan was built
 - c. to explain why the Aztecs were often engaged in warfare
 - d. to inform readers about the life and culture of the Aztecs

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Informational Text 6. Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.



Vocabulary

Directions: Read the questions below and choose the best answer.

1. Part A

“One of the benefits of chinampas was that the mud used was very fertile.” What is the meaning of the word “fertile” in this sentence?

- a. producing many plants
- b. existing in large amounts
- c. belonging to a certain place
- d. having a lot of moisture

Part B

Which detail from paragraph 3 helped you answer Part A?

- a. “on the swamps and marshes”
- b. “covered with reeds and mud”
- c. “perfect for growing beans”
- d. “native peoples of the Americas”

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Informational Text 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings. **Language 4.** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 6 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. **Language 4.a.** Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.



2. Part A

“Aqueducts were used to transport fresh water to the city for irrigation.”
What are “aqueducts”? Think about the meanings of the Latin roots “aqua” and “duct” as well as the context. Draw a line from “aqueducts” to your answer.

“aqueducts”

containers used to store water

passageways used for travel

bridges over rivers or lakes

structures that carry water

Part B

Which detail from paragraph 4 provides a context clue to the meaning of “aqueducts”?

- a. “three wide bridges, or causeways”
- b. “connect it to the mainland”
- c. “transport fresh water to the city”
- d. “travel from one part of the city”

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

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3. Part A

“This was accomplished through both warfare and a kind of diplomacy.” What is the meaning of the word “diplomacy”? Circle your answer below.

- the strategy of increasing power by controlling other lands
- the practice of making agreements between groups of people
- the practice of using military strength to gain valuable goods
- the strategy of surrounding a city to force the people to surrender

Part B

Which **two** details from paragraph 6 of the passage help you understand the meaning of “diplomacy”? **Choose 2 answers.**

- a. “controlled the entire Valley of Mexico”
- b. “had a fierce reputation in battle”
- c. “convince some of the neighboring lords”
- d. “formed an alliance with two . . . cities”
- e. “surrounding the Valley of Mexico”
- f. “collected an annual tribute”

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

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