



Unit 1 C – Classical civilizations

Live from Antiquity!

Social Studies Standards 2 - World History

Key Ideas and Performance Indicators 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.3.1

Roman Coins

Social Studies Standards 2, 3, and 4 - World History, Geography, and Economics

Key Ideas and Performance Indicators 2.4.2, 3.1.4, 4.2.1

Who Were the Ancient Maya?

Social Studies Standards 2 and 3 - World History and Geography

Key Ideas and Performance Indicators 2.3.2, 2.4.2, 3.1.4, 3.2.5

Skills:

- Understanding the concepts of time, continuity, and change
- Getting, using, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting information
- Participating in group planning and discussion

Historical Context:

Scholarly discoveries about the Maya continue to add to our knowledge about the richness and complexity of Maya civilization. This view of indigenous groups in the Americas may be contrary to traditional presentations of Native Americans in textbooks and other readings. Students should also be aware that the Maya culture continues in small villages in present-day Yucatan, southern Mexico, and Guatemala. The modern Maya continue some of the traditions of the ancient Maya, including papermaking, pottery, and weaving.

Activities:

Show students of a picture or drawing of a Maya pyramid. Have students discuss the following questions:

- Where do you think this pyramid was built?
- Who made this building?
- How was it made?
- What was its purpose?

Discuss Egyptian pyramids and answer the same questions. Discuss Mayan contributions to American civilizations.

Have students review the handouts (listed below)

[Handout 1: The Mayas](#)

[Handout 2: Gathering Evidence On the Maya](#)

[Handout 3: Markers of Mayan Culture](#)

[Handout 4: Blueprint of a 2,000-Year-Old City](#)

[Handout 5: How Families Lived](#)

[Handout 6: The Cycle of Life in a Mayan Village](#)

Distribute [Handout 1: *The Mayas*](#). Based on this handout, have students develop individual lists of Mayan accomplishments. Next have students discuss Mayan contributions to the civilizations of the Americas.

Give each student a copy of [Handout 2: *Gathering Evidence On the Maya*](#) and [Handout 3: *Markers of Mayan Culture*](#). Have pairs or small groups of students read the map. Have them list on Handout 2 three important pieces of information about the Maya that they can learn from this source. Ask each pair/group to report back to the class on the information that they gathered.

Give each pair/group [Handout 4: *Blueprint of a 2,000-Year-Old City*](#). Have students “read” this blueprint of the city of El Mirador. Ask students to add three more pieces of information from this diagram to their list of what they already know about the Maya.

Give students [Handout 5: *How Families Lived*](#) and [Handout 6: *The Cycle of Life in a Mayan Village*](#). Have students read this short selection and add five *more* pieces of information from this diagram to their list of what they already know about the Maya life and culture to Handout 2.

Ask each student to write four major generalizations about the Maya on [Handout 2](#). Have students share these ideas verbally with the rest of the class. Ask students to describe the complexity of the Maya culture based on the information they now have.

The Maya civilization is often known for its unusual demise, rather than for its productivity. Although several theories have been put forth over time, the riddle of the “lost civilization” remains a mystery to historians. Have students research this topic, and write short papers exploring this mystery.

Context:

This lesson plan begins with the study of Sophocles' *Antigone* and the universal issues it raises about power, gender, family obligation, ethics, and honor. It then moves to an exploration of ancient Greece, accenting the importance of theater and its staging, and the nature of tragedy in this culture. The lesson plan culminates in student presentations and performances.