

## **Chapter 1, Lesson 2 Notes**

### **Cities and Empires**

- Great civilizations (Highly developed societies) prospered in Mexico, Central America and South America centuries before Europeans arrived in the Americas
- The civilizations built large cities, had advanced tools and building techniques and developed complex writing systems and ways to track time

#### **I. Olmecs**

- Earliest known civilization in the Americas
- Located in present day Mexico between 1200 B.C. and 800 B.C.
- Olmecs built stone houses, monuments and drainage systems for farming
- While the Olmec civilization declined they influenced later civilizations

#### **II. Maya**

- Located in present-day Mexico & Central America between 250 A.D. and 1200 A.D.
- Farming society that grew maize (corn), beans, squash and other vegetables
- Maya population peaked at about 2 million people
- Religion and worshiping the stars, sun and moon very important
- Developed a 365 day calendar and a writing system to record things
- Maya also involved in trade so their influence was widespread
- Historians do not know why the Maya civilization started to decline around 1200 A.D.

#### **III. Aztecs**

- Around 1325 the Aztec people (who were nomadic) settled in Central America and built a city called Tenochtitlan where present day Mexico City is located
- The Aztecs would developed an advanced civilization
- At its height, Tenochtitlan was the largest city in the Americas and one of the largest cities in the world.
- The Aztecs built roads and causeways to reach their capital of Tenochtitlan which was located in the middle of a lake.
- The Aztecs created a military empire in which they conquered many of their neighbors and enslaved many of the people they conquered
- Religion was also important and they practiced human sacrifice to please their gods
- The Aztec civilizations was still going strong when the Spanish came to the Americas starting in 1492

## *Chapter 1, Lesson 2 Notes (Cont.)*

### IV. Incas

- Located in South America the Incas were the largest of all the early civilizations stretching for more than 3000 miles along the west coast of South America
- Warfare was very important to the Incas.
- Incas made magnificent gold jewelry and temple ornaments to please the sun god
- The Incas developed an ingenious way to farm in the mountains - terrace farming (Incas cut terraces into the mountains to plant crops)
- Since the empire was so large the Incas built over 10,000 miles of stone-paved roads to connect their empire.
- The Incas were a thriving and advanced civilization like the Aztecs when the Spanish arrived in the early 1500s