

The Incas

The Incas used to live in small towns and villages in the mountains of Ecuador, Peru and Chile, from the 12th to the 16th century.

They used to be very good builders and engineers and built many fantastic tunnels and bridges. They were also rich and used to have lots of silver and gold.

They used to believe in a Sun god and they built many temples to please him. Many of these can still be seen today. They used to travel from their towns and villages into their cities for special festivals when they would pray to the Sun god. They used to believe that when a person died they went to heaven or hell.

They used to speak a language called Quechua and some people in the Andes, a group of mountains in South America, still speak it. Even though their language has survived, the Incas have disappeared because they were conquered by the Spanish in the 1560s.



The Mayans

The Mayans were a group of people who used to live in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and southern Mexico, mostly in the years between 300 and 900AD.

They used to have many different gods; most of them looked like lizards. The Mayans used to give human blood to their gods to keep them happy. They believed that only very special people went to heaven when they died and most people went to hell.

Priests used to be very important to Mayans and only they were allowed to live in the wonderful big cities that the Mayans built. Most Mayans, however, used to live in small villages in the rainforest.

They used to speak a language called Mayan and this is still spoken by a small number of people today. A few Mayans still live in some parts of Central America.



Mayans and Incas

Activity Comparing texts

Aim To read about two ancient civilizations and to find the differences.

Interaction Pairs

Language focus *used to/didn't use to*

Skills focus Reading, writing, speaking, listening

Preparation Photocopy the worksheet once for each pair and cut it up along the dotted lines.

Time 25 minutes

Procedure

- 1 Ask the students to think of any ancient civilizations that they know of and tell the rest of the class about them. Tell the students that they are going to read about two old civilizations from South and Central America.
- 2 Pre-teach the words *rainforest*, *heaven*, *hell* and *lizard*. Ask the students to predict what they think life used to be like for people living in that part of the world a long time ago. Put questions on the board to help them such as *What did they believe?/Which gods did they worship?/What countries did they live in?/When did they live?/Do they still live there?/What languages do/did they speak?*
- 3 Divide the class into two groups, A and B, and ask each student to work with a partner from the same group. Hand out the text about the Incas to the students of group A and the text about the Mayans to the students of group B. Ask them to read the texts and to note down information using the questions on the board to help them. They have to use *used to/didn't use to* in their answers.
- 4 Tell the students that they should now divide up so that a student from group A works with a student from group B. Using their notes, they have to tell their partner all about the people that they read about in order to find as many differences as they can between the groups of people.

Variations

- 1 The students can write sentences describing the differences.
- 2 The students could also work together to find any similarities between the two groups of people.
- 3 The students could write some sentences describing how life in their country has changed for the same time period as the reading texts.

Key

- 1 The Incas used to live in Ecuador, Peru and Chile, the Mayans used to live in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and southern Mexico.
- 2 The Incas lived from the 12th to the 16th century, the Mayans lived mostly between 300 and 900AD.
- 3 The Incas used to believe in a Sun god while the Mayans used to believe in many different gods.
- 4 The Incas used to live in the mountains, the Mayans used to live in the rainforest.
- 5 The Incas used to speak Quechua, the Mayans used to speak Mayan.
- 6 The Incas used to believe that people went to heaven or to hell when they died, the Mayans used to believe that only special people went to heaven.
- 7 The Incas were rich, the Mayans weren't (they lived in small villages in the rainforest).
- 8 The Incas have disappeared, a few Mayans still remain.