



The Awesome Aztecs

Introduction

The Aztec tribe lived in ancient Mexico for about 400 years.

For the first 200 years, the Aztecs were constantly on the move. No one wanted the Aztecs as neighbors. The Aztecs practiced human sacrifice. They believed that if their gods were not fed, they would not do their jobs. The sun god would not bring up the sun, and everyone would die.



Introduction

To keep their gods happy, the Aztecs believed that human sacrifice was necessary. They used people to feed their hungry gods.

Some of the people they sacrificed were Aztecs. However, most of the people they sacrificed were captured from neighboring tribes. This did not make them popular with their neighbors. Sooner or later, their neighbors would band together to chase the Aztecs away.

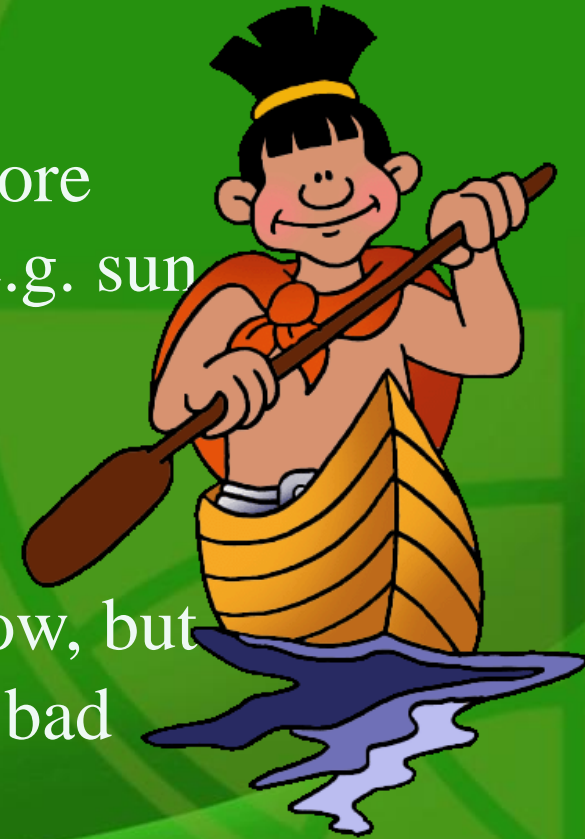


The Aztec Gods

Religion was extremely important in Aztec life.

They worshipped hundreds of gods and goddesses, each of whom ruled one or more human activities or as aspects of nature e.g. sun rain.

They believe that everything in life is controlled by the gods, they bring good things, such as rain to make the crops grow, but also bad things like disease, drought and bad luck.



The Aztec Gods

Huitzilopochtli- He is the god of war and the rising sun and special guardian of Tenochtitlan. He is the special god of the Aztec people, they believed he brought them success in war.

His temple on the main pyramid was the focus of fearsome sacrifices of the prisoners captured by Aztec warriors.

Victims' heads were strung as trophies on a great rack.

He is always shown as a warrior. He wears a warrior's cotton oversuit and carries a shield and a snake of fire. His body and clothes are painted blue.



Settlement

When the Aztecs first arrived in the Valley of Mexico, other tribes were already living on the best land in the area.

This time, rather than fight for the best land or for captives to feed their hungry gods, the Aztecs quietly settled along the swampy shores of Lake Texcoco.

They built canoes so they could fish, hunt waterfowl, and trade with other tribes for the building materials they needed.



Aztec Sun Stone

The Aztec people carved the Sun Stone from solidified lava stone in the late 1400s. It was lost for 300 years and found buried under Mexico City's main square or Zocalo.

In the middle of the stone is Tonatiuh (pronounced Tohnah-tee-uh), the Aztec Sun god, holding a human heart in each hand and his tongue outstretched as a blade used for sacrifices.



Aztec Sun Stone

Around him, the stone shows two calendar systems, one for farming and the other for religious ceremonies.

The farming calendar contains 365 days, broken into groups of 20 days for each of the 18 months. It describes daily rituals, seasons and planting, alongside predicting solar eclipses and disasters.



Aztec Sun Stone

The religious calendar describes each day in relation to the Aztec gods, with each day given one of 20 names such as jaguar, water, wind or a number between 1-13.

This is because Aztec weeks were 13 days long. As the two calendars work together, days were given a different set of names, numbers and symbols that wouldn't repeat for 52 years. Aztecs believed that when the two calendars aligned, the universe was in danger, so they performed rituals including sacrifices to please their gods.

Your Task this week!

Your task is to create an Aztec god of your own. Remember that they had a god or goddess to represent everything. Describe what it is they represent and this can be more than one thing.

Describe what they look like and what the things they hold or wear represent (this should be to do with what they are god/goddess of).

Create an illustration of your god/goddess and label each important part.

Extension

Write a myth or story about your god/goddess.

