

**Early Peoples Activity Sheet:**  
**The Inca**

**Pre-Columbian life in the Americas: Social organisation, city life and beliefs**

**Inca Empire:**

**1. Who were the Inca?**

The Inca were a native South American people who ruled a huge empire in the Americas.

**2. What region was the heart of the Inca empire?**

The heart of this wealthy empire was the region around Cusco, or Cuzco, a city in the valley of the Andes Mountains in what is now southern Peru.

**3. When was the Inca empire founded?**

The Inca empire was founded in the 1430's.

**4. What modern day countries formed part of the Inca empire?**

The Inca empire included parts of present-day Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador.

**5. Describe the landscape and terrain of the land?**

The lands ruled by the Inca included rain forests and harsh deserts and stretched from high mountains to beaches along the Pacific shore.

**6. Look at the gold plate on page 5. What does it tell us about the Inca's?**

The gold plate crafted by the Inca depicts the sun. The Inca's most important god was Inti, the sun god.

**7. Why do historians know very little about how commoners lived, or about life in areas far from Cusco?**

Most of the written accounts of the Inca are from the Spanish point of view and show little understanding of Inca life. In addition, much information has been lost because the Spaniards generally tried to destroy beliefs and practices that they felt went against Christian religion. Furthermore, nearly all of the information the Spaniards recorded about the Inca came from Incan nobles.

**8. How many people are believed to have lived under Inca rule?**

From 3.5 million to 7 million people are believed to have lived under Inca rule.

**9. How did the Inca become the most powerful group in South America?**

The Inca used both military skill and alliances to bring dozens of other groups into their empire. They combined religion and government to rule the people who far outnumbered them.

**10. How did the Inca manage their vast empire?**

The Inca built a network of roads that linked every part of their empire. These roads made it possible for goods, messengers, and soldiers to move easily from one area to another.

**11. How did the Inca keep records?**

The Inca had a way of keeping records by using knotted string called quipu to keep track of the people and animals in the area. The quipu were also used by people trained in interpreting them to help remember stories from Inca myth and history.

**12. What was one of the factors that led the Inca to expand their reach beyond the Cusco valley?**

The desire for wealth moved the Inca into regions that held such precious metals as gold and silver, delicate and colourful bird feathers, and valuable shells.

**13. Looking at the map on page 13. Which Inca rulers added the most territory to the Inca empire?**

Pachacuti and Topa Inca Yupanqui

**Roles of key groups in society:**

**1. Who was the Sapa?**

The Inca ruler was called the Sapa, which means Sole Inca or Unique Inca and was always a member of the royal family.

**2. Which god was the Sapa believed to be the physical representation of?**

The Sapa Inca was believed to be the physical representation of the gods, particularly Inti, the sun god and the most important god in the Inca religion.

**3. Who was Manco Capac?**

Manco Capac was the first Inca ruler in Inca legend. They believed Inti, the sun god, was the father of Manco Capac and because all other Inca rulers were descendants of Manco Capac, that their ancestry could be traced directly to Inti.

**4. Who was the coya?**

The coya, was the chief wife of the Sapa. The coya represented the moon, in contrast to the Sapa. She was often the sister or first cousin of the Sapa Inca.

**5. How many wives did some Inca rulers have in addition to the coya?**

Some Inca rulers had as many as 100 wives in addition to the coya. These wives came from Inca noble families or were the daughters of the leaders of other peoples.

**6. Who was eligible to succeed to the position of Sapa Inca?**

The position of ruler was not always necessarily passed from father to son. The ruler had to be of royal blood but he could come from one of the many branches of Manco Capac's descendants. The ruler would name his successor, however the act of naming a successor would not guarantee that that person would rule.

**7. Name and describe the people groups that made up the social structure of the nobility at the time of the Spanish arrival?**

The Inca had three ranks of nobility.

i) The panaca formed the highest-ranking group of nobles. These included all the descendants of a Sapa Inca. There were 10 panaca when the Spanish arrived.

ii) Those who were related to the Sapa Inca but less closely e.g. members of this group might include the offspring of the Sapa Inca's secondary wives.

iii) Inca by Privilege were the highest-ranking members of other ethnic groups that lived in the Inca empire. Only leaders who agreed to join the empire by alliance were able to become Inca by Privilege.

**8. What was the role of panaca?**

The panaca would look after the lands of the Sapa Inca. They were also required to take care of the Sapa Inca's tomb, when he died. Members of the Sapa Inca's panaca filled the highest military and government posts.

**9. Explain the ranking of priests?**

The highest ranked priest was the High Priest of the Sun, who was probably only second to the Sapa Inca in power. This priest had the task of confirming the person chosen as Sapa Inca in power. The high priest came from one of the royal panaca. He played a role in choosing a new Sapa Inca and in some cases, also an important military leader. The rank of other priests depended on the importance of the temple or shrine where they served.

**10. How did priests care for royal mummies?**

Some priests attended the needs of the mummies of dead rulers, and their coya (queens) by providing food to the mummies, the priests took the mummies to other shrines for "visits" and to important festivals. This enabled the Sapa Inca and the coya to live on in the community long after death.

**11. What non-religious roles did priests play?**

Priests were not just limited to religious roles, however. They helped advise rulers and high-ranking officials about what actions these leaders should take. Priests did this by reading whether the omens favoured one choice or another. The priest could read patterns, for example, in corn kernels, the leaves of a coca plant, or the movement of spiders – to determine what the future would bring.

**12. Which groups made up the commoner class?**

Inca commoners included merchants, craft workers, and farmers, as well as the messengers and quipu makers who worked for the government.

**13. How were people taxed?**

The Inca did not have a system of money, so the government would collect taxes by collecting a share of each farmer's harvest; it took a share of cloth goods produced; and it required men to perform some work for the state, called mita.

**14. What was mita and how did commoners perform their mita?**

Mita was a required labour tax. Some commoners performed their mita by working in fields that belonged to the Sapa Inca or the priests. Others built roads, irrigation canals, and temples.

**15. Who were the most highly ranked craft workers?**

Skilled workers of gold and silver were the most highly ranked craft workers.

**16. What activity did all levels of Inca society learn to do?**

People from all levels of Inca society learned to weave cloth.

**Women:**

**1. What role did women play in Inca society?**

Outside of the household, women did not take part in public life. Within the household, Inca women were powerful. In some areas, women controlled the goods within the household.

**2. Explain the differing marriage proposal customs in Inca society.**

Marriage customs could differ from region to region within the empire. In certain areas, the single women and men lined up in the town square. Young men stated which woman they wanted. If two men spoke for the same woman, the governor of the area decided the matter. In other areas, a man spoke to a woman's parents to get permission to marry her.

**3. Describe marriage ceremonies in Inca society.**

In some areas, a young man gave coca leaves to his bride's mother. When the leaves were accepted, the couple was married. In other regions, the groom placed a sandal on the bride's foot to seal the marriage.

**4. What duties were expected to be carried out by a married woman?**

A married woman's duties included caring for the house, preparing food, weaving cloth, and bearing and caring for children. Women also worked alongside men in many kinds of labour, including farming.

**5. Who were the aclla?**

The accla or "chosen women" were young girls who were selected to learn about Incan religion as well as how to weave and cook. After four years of training, the accla could become priestesses and play an important part in Incan ceremonies.

**Everyday life:**

**1. What does Tawantinsuyu mean?**

The Inca people called their realm Tawantinsuyu, which means "Four Parts Together".

**2. Where was considered the centre of the Inca universe?**

Cusco, the capital, was believed by the Inca to be the centre of the universe. Each part of the empire radiated out from the centre of Cusco.

**3. In what ways did the Inca impose order on their subjects?**

They imposed order on their subjects partly by linking the power of the state with religious belief, as well as being able to offer a promise of protection in return for their obedience. The Inca people received security from attack by peoples outside the empire.

**4. Who lived in Cusco?**

Cusco was the home to the Sapa Inca and members of the royal family, to priests, and to

their attendants. Few common people lived in the sacred city. Commoners came to the city only for ceremonies or festivals.

### **Religious beliefs and customs:**

**1. Why are there a large number of origin myths in Inca religion?**

The Inca had many myths to explain their origin. Perhaps the large number of origin myths told by the Inca arose because of the empire's attempt to bring many different religious practices under religious system over time.

**2. In one of the myths, who was the leader of the group of ancestors who emerged from the central cave in the mountain in Pacaritambo?**

Manco Capac.

**3. According to this creation myth, how did the group of ancestors know that the valley was the place to live?**

When Manco Capac heaved the golden pole into the valley and it sank into the rich earth, they knew they had found a place to live.

**4. What lake plays a prominent role in Incan mythology, particularly in another creation myth?**

Lake Titicaca.

**5. Who were the major gods of the state religion?**

The major gods of the state religion centred on Cusco were Viracocha, the creator god; Inti, the sun god; and Inti-Illapa, the thunder god.

**6. Which god was considered the most important god and why?**

Inti, the sun god was considered the most important god because the Sapa Inca was descended from him.

**7. Why were offerings made to Inti-Illapa?**

Inti-Illapa was the god of thunder and weather. He was responsible for rainfall. The Inca built ceremonial platforms across the landscape where they gave offerings to Inti-Illapa for rain.

**8. Which god do some experts believe to have been more important than the sun god in regions outside of Cusco?**

Mama-Quilla, the moon goddess, was important because the Inca used the phases of the moon as basis of part of their calendar.

**9. What drink was prepared for important religious ceremonies?**

Chicia, a corn-based beer was an important part of Inca religious ceremonies honouring the gods.

**10. Why are there no royal remains in existence today?**

The Inca would worship the mummified remains of royals. After the Spanish conquest, Spanish authorities saw mummy worship as a threat to their political power and the Christian religion. To end this threat, the Spaniards destroyed all the royal mummies as well as those of high-ranking nobles.

**11. What funerary practices were implemented on royals?**

Royals were mummified. Experts on the Inca believe that when royals died, priests removed the internal organs from the royal bodies. These organs, except for the heart, were then burned. The ashes were placed in the hollow stomach of the punchao, a statue of Inti, and the hearts were collected in a case in Cusco's Temple of the Sun. Then the bodies were set out so that the sun and dry air of the high Andes would preserve the remains.

**12. What did the Inca do with the remains of common people?**

The remains of common people were also sometimes made into mummies. Commoners as well as nobles were buried in mummy bundles, which could consist of one or several bodies. They did not remove their internal organs and each body was wrapped in cotton, and it dried naturally.

**13. What kind of objects were placed along with the dead?**

Mummies were buried with clothing, food, weapons, and other valuables. The amount and quality of the goods placed in these burials depended on the rank of the individual at his or her time of death.

**14. What was the largest festival celebrated by the Inca?**

The largest festival was the Capac Raymi. It took place at the summer solstice. At Capac Raymi, all the noble males who had reached adulthood during the previous year celebrated their entry into manhood.

**15. What was the Inti Raymi?**

The Inti Raymi was held by the Inca around the winter solstice to persuade the sun to not withdraw any farther from Earth.

**16. Who was the Ice Maiden?**

The Ice Maiden is a mummy of a teenaged girl killed as a sacrifice about 500 years ago. The frozen remains were found at Mount Ampato in 1995. It is one of the best preserved mummies in the world.

**17. How did the Ice Maiden die?**

Using computed tomography, doctors determined that the Ice Maiden died of a head injury. She was killed with a club and then arranged in her grave.

**18. Why were children sacrificed during the Capac Hucha?**

The Inca believed that the sacrificed children linked villages throughout the empire, no matter how distant, to the ruler at its centre.

**19. What was the Coricancha?**

The Coricancha was a temple complex and was the most magnificent of all Inca buildings.

**Everyday life:**

**1. What made the Temple of the Sun so spectacular?**

The walls of the Temple of the Sun were covered with hundreds of gold plates.

**2. Why were there so many royal palaces in Cusco?**

Ruling Sapa Incas built large palace complexes. Some of these palaces later housed royal mummies. If a palace remained in the use of a royal mummy, the Sapa Inca had to build a new palace for himself.

**3. Why did the royals not have tombs?**

The Inca did not have magnificent tombs because they did not bury their royal dead. When Sapa Incas and their wives died, they were mummified so that they could continue to take part in ceremonies.

**4. Which two buildings acted as “fortresses” during the Inca resistance to Spanish invasion and what were they built for?**

Sacayhuaman, near Cusco seems to have been built originally as a temple and religious complex. The Ollantaytambo, on a mountain north of Cusco was only partially completed when the Spaniards arrived, it was a royal estate of Pachacuti, with a palace, other housing, temples, roads, and bridges.

**5. What type of calendar did the Inca have?**

The Inca had a lunar calendar, which was based upon the phases of the moon.

**6. Name the two kinds of stonework used by the Inca.**

- i) Ashlar refers to stone that was cut into rectangles of the size and then stacked. These stones were used on walls that stood alone.
- ii) Polygonal refers to stones of several shapes. Builders had to carefully cut pieces to perfectly fit each one next to its neighbour. These were used by the Inca to erect buildings.

**7. How did the Inca build the huge walls found in their cities?**

Experts believe the Inca piled up earth on one side of a wall, forming a ramp at the height of the course of the stone then making up the wall. The next large stone to go into the wall was moved over the earth and put into place. Then more earth was added, bringing the ramp up to the level of the next course of stone. The earth was then removed once the wall was completed.

**8. What was quipu?**

Quipu was a system of knotted strings that were used to record information.

**9. How do scholars interpret quipu?**

Scholars do not know how to read the knotted strings. Researchers are trying to connect the quipu knots with the kinds and quantities of goods found at the site where they were found. Scholars are also using computer programs to analyse known quipus to find patterns that can give clues to their meaning.

**10. How were quipus used?**

The quipus were tools for accounting, ways of keeping track of the number of animals in a flock or the number of people in a village. Some scholars believe the quipus may also have been used as a form of written language – to record, for instance, histories, but that is less certain.

**11. Who transported quipus?**

Quipus were carried by the chaski, the royal messengers who carried news and information along the roads. They were young men especially trained to run. A relay of messengers stationed at various spots along the road would run the message. It was efficient and fast, covering 240 kilometres in a day in some cases.

**12. At what age were Inca children named?**

Once the child was over 2 years old and no longer being nursed by his or her mother was a child named during a special ceremony.

**13. What other activity took place during a child's naming ceremony?**

Children were also given their first haircut at the age of 2. The hair was kept and carefully guarded by the family. The Inca believed that the hair held the spirit of the person. If someone with supernatural power gained control of the hair, he or she could cast a spell to hurt the individual.

**14. What type of education did Inca children receive?**

Boys and girls were taught by their parents. Boys were taught the trade or skill their father practiced. Girls learned how to cook, run the household, and weave from their mother. The only girls to be formally educated were those selected to be aclla. Noble boys were sent to Cusco, where they were taught by government teachers about history, religion and how to make and read quipu.

**15. What was given to Inca boys and girls during their adult ceremony?**

At the ceremony that marked their becoming adults, Inca boys and girls were given their adult name.

**16. What did marriage between a man and woman mean for the families?**

The marriage of a man and woman bound not just the couple, but also their two families. These families were expected to support and help each other when needed.

**17. What were the differences between the homes of the nobles and common people?**

The homes of common people had no windows and just one door, with a leather or cloth hanging covering the door. Noble houses had windows and a wooden door. Noble homes were much larger than those of common people.

**18. What was unique about the types of windows used in noble houses?**

Noble houses had windows that were shaped like a trapezoid where the windows are larger at one end than the other.

**19. Describe the type of clothing worn by men?**

Men wore loose tunics that hung down to the knee.

**20. Describe the type of clothing worn by women?**

Women wore dresses that hung down to the knee.

**21. Clothing styles worn by Inca were similar across all classes. What feature distinguished the clothing of a noble and royalty to that of a commoner?**



Clothing for people of different status varied in the quality of fabric and materials used. Nobles and royalty wore clothing made of a blend of fine wool and cotton. These garments might have decorations of gold, silver, and shell. The common people wore clothes made of fairly coarse wool.

**22. What types of food were eaten by Inca commoners?**

Inca commoners mostly ate corn, potatoes and other vegetables, and quinoa. Food was flavoured with chili peppers. They sometimes ate cakes made from dried corn meal. Meat came from older animals that could no longer work, and was eaten stewed.

**23. Why was the Sapa Inca's leftover food kept?**

The bones from animals, cobs of corn, and other leftovers from the Sapa Inca's meal were all carefully preserved until they could be burned in a special ceremony. Burning them was thought to prevent an evil person from using the garbage as a way to cast a spell on Sapa Inca.

**24. How did Inca preserve food?**

The Inca took advantage of the cold, dry temperatures of the highland climate to preserve food. Left out at night, foods in the highland froze. The next day, the Inca would press and squeeze out the water left in the item and then leave it to dry in the sun. Potatoes and other food freeze-dried like this could be stored and eaten later.

**25. How many kilometres did the Inca's extensive network of roads cover?**

The Inca's extensive network of roads covered around 39,900 kilometres and linked every corner of the empire.

**26. Look at the account written by Spanish soldier, Pedro de Cieza de Leon. What type of terrain did the road network cover and what featured along the route?**

According to Pedro de Cieza de Leon the Inca's extensive road network ran through deep valleys, high mountains, banks of snow, torrents of water, living rock, and wild rivers. The roads were clean and swept free of refuse, with lodgings and storehouses, temples and posts along the route.

**27. Who was the Civil War between and why did it start?**

The untimely death of the named successor to the Sapa Inca left two rivals for the throne, Huascar and Atahualpa, who were half-brothers. Huascar was named Sapa Inca but quickly upset people in the capital, Cusco. Atahualpa is viewed to have taken steps to attempt to stake a claim at the throne. A civil war raged for several years between the two half-brothers with Atahualpa eventually victorious.

**Spanish conquest:**

**1. What was the name of the Spanish soldier who led a group of conquistadors in the Inca area?**

Spanish soldier Francisco Pizarro led the Spanish conquistadors who were in search for the Inca empire.

**2. Why were the Spanish interested in the Inca empire?**

While living in Panama City, Francisco Pizarro heard of the wealth of the Inca empire and began exploring to find the empire.

**3. What happened in Cajamarca in 1532 when the Inca met with the Spaniards?**

In Cajamarca in 1532, hidden Spanish soldiers with cannons in the surrounding buildings of a plaza massacred thousands of Inca. Not a single Spaniard died.

**4. What does this event tell you about the Spanish treatment of Inca?**

The massacre at Cajamarca illustrates the brutality of the Spanish when dealing with the Inca.

**5. After being captured by the Spanish, Atahualpa offered to pay a huge ransom for his freedom. How much did he offer?**

Atahualpa promised to fill a room to half its height with objects of gold and to fill it twice with goods of silver. Over several months the Inca were able to provide the ransom goods.

**6. What happened to Atahualpa and what does this tell us about the nature of interaction between the Spanish and the Inca?**

Despite paying the promised ransom, Pizarro executed Atahualpa. This demonstrates the brutal treatment of the Inca by the Spanish.

**7. What is considered the “deadliest weapon” the Spanish brought with them?**

The diseases the Europeans brought across with them when they came to the Americas are responsible for killing hundreds of thousands of the Inca and people living under Inca rule. Native peoples had no natural defences against these illnesses.

**8. The Inca continued to resist Spanish rule for more than 30 years. What does this say about the Inca?**

The Inca's continued resistance against Spanish rule demonstrates the tenacity of the Inca to remain independent of foreign rule. Despite a major loss against the Spaniards in 1536, Manco Inca, the Inca Sapa, and his followers escaped to continue the resistance against the Spanish. Rulers after Manco Inca did also until they were eventually defeated in 1572.