

# Lesson 2 The Aztecs

## AGES 7–9

### Objectives

- To understand that the Aztecs had a different way of measuring time.
- To make a model Aztec house.
- To learn how the Aztecs produced enough food for their huge population.

### Subject references

#### History

- Place people in correct periods of time. (NC: KS2 1a)
- Identify characteristic features of a society. (NC: KS2 2a)
- Study a society in relation to other societies, houses and cities. (NC: KS2 13)

#### Design and technology

- Generate ideas for products. (NC: KS2 1a)
- Measure mark out, cut a range of materials and assemble and combine components and materials accurately. (NC: KS2 2d)

#### Mathematics

- Choose and use suitable measuring instruments for a task. (NC: KS2 Ma3 4b)

### Resources and preparation

- For the starter, you will need the following dates on a set of large cards (or you could use an interactive whiteboard and have the information in separate boxes that can be moved around the screen): The Aztecs 1195–1521; The Egyptians 3100bc–ad30; The Ancient Greeks 900bc–148bc; The Romans 735bc–ad476; The Anglo Saxons 350–1066; The Vikings 793–1035; The Tudors 1485–1603; The Victorians 1831–1901.
- Each child or group will need: photocopyable page 46 copied onto card, scissors, a paper clip, card.
- If children will make a calendar holder, provide pieces of card, glue, some pictures showing Aztec life, which could help to stimulate design ideas.
- More confident children will need metre rules or a tape measure and canes for measuring out a chinampa.

### Starter

- Tell the children that a group of people who lived in Mexico settled in the Valley of Mexico in around 1195. In 1325, at Lake Texcoco they built a city called Tenochtitlan on an island. In time, the population spread out, conquered the lands around them and built up a large empire. In 1521, Spaniards arrived and put Tenochtitlan under siege. The Aztecs eventually surrendered and

their empire was lost.

- Set up the date cards at the front of the classroom in random order and ask the children to help you to arrange them in chronological order so that you can make a timeline to show how the Aztecs fitted in with other periods and peoples of history.

### What to do

- Tell the children that the Aztecs had a complicated calendar, within which each month had 20 days. Issue the photocopies of page 46 and explain that the Aztecs invented a kind of picture writing: the days of the month are shown in the border. Ask the children to guess what the symbols represent. (The month starts with the day of the crocodile and you follow the pictures in an anticlockwise direction to come to the last day of the month – the day of the flower).
- Let the children cut out the pictures, arrange them in order from front to back and hold them together with a paper clip. Alternatively, you may like them to design and make a holder for the cards.
- Move on to tell the children that as the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan increased in size, more land was needed to grow food for the increasing population. The Aztecs solved the problem by building chinampas. Mud

was dug up from the lake and piled up to make an island between 6m and 10m wide and



PHOTOGRAPH © PETER ROWE



between 30m and 61 m long. The mud was held in place by walls made of branches woven together, and willow trees were planted so that their roots could hold the soil in place. Crops such as maize, beans, squashes and peppers were grown.

- On a larger chinampa, a farmer could erect a house for himself and his family. The house would have one or two rooms. Ask the children to cut the model house from the photocopyable sheet and assemble it. Tell them to fold along all the lines and use the tabs to stick the ends of the houses to the roof and long sides.
- Look at the illustration of the chinampa with its house and give the children some card to make a chinampa for their house.

### Differentiation

- Less confident learners may need help in thinking of a design for a calendar holder. You may also want to enlarge the templates for the house to ease cutting and assembly.
- More confident learners could measure out and mark the sizes of two chinampas (one that is 6m by 30m and one 10m by 60m) on the school field for the whole class to look at.

### Assessment

The children can be assessed on the design of their calendar holders and the construction of their houses and chinampas.

### Plenary

- Let the children gather their chinampa together as a village. Tell them that the Aztecs built canals between the chinampas, wide enough to allow two canoes to pass each other. Arrange the chinampa accordingly.
- The children might want to keep their calendars on their desks and turn them every day. If you plan a Rainforest Day in the next three weeks, the children can work out what day it will be on their calendar and count down to the day in Aztec days.

### Outcomes

- The children can make a calendar holder and use the Aztec calendar.
- The children can make a model farmhouse and chinampa.

