

Lesson 1: Geography of South America

Vocabulary

wetland an area of very moist soil, such as a swamp

biome a place that has a particular climate and types of plants and animals

scrub land an area where plants grow low

archipelago a group of islands

A Land of World Records

South America is a land of world records. It has the world's highest waterfall, Angel Falls. It has the world's second longest river, the Amazon River. It has the world's largest rain forest, the Amazon rain forest. It has the world's largest **wetland**, the Pantanal. And it has the world's longest mountain chain, the 4,500-mile-long Andes Mountains. High in the mountains there are glaciers. People have lived in the harsh Andes for thousands of years, including on the Altiplano. The Altiplano is a region of high plains and plateaus. People could farm potatoes, grain, and maize (corn) in this cold, dry place. Two animals, the llama and the alpaca, were first domesticated on the Altiplano.

Lake Titicaca

Lake Titicaca lies on the Altiplano in the present-day countries of Bolivia and Peru. Some ruins at Lake Titicaca are more than 2,000 years old. Lake Titicaca has a mild climate. One advantage of living near the lake is that many rivers flow into the lake. These rivers provide fresh water and fish. The land near the lake can grow crops such as maize, potatoes, and barley. Reeds grow at the edge of the lake. People have been using the reeds to make boats to sail on the lake since ancient times.

Many Landscapes

South America is home to many different kinds of **biomes**. Biomes are places with their own type of climate and own types of plants and animals. Grasslands, deserts, and rain forests are types of biomes. The Andes Mountains run along the western edge of South America. They run through both the northern and southern parts of the continent. The Amazon River is in the north. The river drains the Amazon rain forest. The Eastern Highlands are mountains in the northeast. Also in this region are the Guiana Highlands, a land of tropical forests. Central and southern South America are different. This area is a land of plains. The Atacama Desert is in the northern part of the present-day country of Chile. Much of southern and central South America is **scrub land**, or an area where plants grow low to the ground. The Pampas, a huge grassland, sits at the southern end of the plains. The southern tip of South America is made up of an **archipelago**, or group of islands. It is called Tierra del Fuego.

The Peoples of South America

People have lived in all of the different regions of South America. Only a few of the early peoples created large civilizations. This may be because mountains and forests separated people from one another. Yet a civilization did grow in a surprising place, the rugged Andes Mountains.

Lesson 2: The Chavín and the Mochica

The Chavín

From about 900 B.C. to 200 B.C., the Chavín civilization lived in the Andes Mountains in the present-day country of Peru. The Chavín lived here even though Peru is a rough land. Its coasts are dry and its mountains are high. We know about the civilization because of its ruins, especially the city of Chavín. The Chavín were great artists. Today they are famous for their art. They made textiles, pottery, and stone carvings. The Chavín style of art is known for its pictures of jaguars, crocodiles, and serpents. Some people think that the Chavín worshipped jaguars.

Archaeologists have found Chavín art over a large area. This may mean that the Chavín influenced and brought together the other peoples living in the area. No one knows why the Chavín suddenly disappeared. After the Chavín vanished, the ancient people of Peru split into many cultures. They would not come together for another 500 years.

The Mochica

The Mochica civilization began about A.D. 100 in today's Peru. It lasted for about 700 years. These people are called the Mochica because their artifacts have been found in the Moche Valley. Like the Chavín before them, the Mochica lived in river valleys between the

mountains of Peru. The Mochica were great artists too. They left behind ceramic pots, woven textiles, murals, and amazing metal objects. The Mochica were also skilled fishermen, builders, and farmers. They irrigated their crops with the water that flowed down from the Andes. Mochica city-states had pyramids, stone courtyards, and plazas. The ruins of these city-states tell much about Mochica life. Water jars were painted with pictures of gods and ceremonies. These pictures give us information about Mochica religion. The disappearance of the Mochica remains a mystery.

Solving a Mystery

Archaeologists are still finding artifacts from these two civilizations. Every new artifact tells us a little more about these people's lives. The Andes Mountains might not seem to be a good place for an empire to begin. But hundreds of years after the Mochica disappeared, a great empire did begin in this region.

Lesson 3: The Inca

Vocabulary

quipu a rope with different lengths and colors of knotted cord used to keep track of things

A Vast Empire

The Inca Empire was the largest and richest empire the Americas had ever seen. The empire stretched down the western side of the Andes. It included dozens of different peoples. Little is known about the Inca's beginnings. Much of what we do know comes from the archaeological site of Machu Picchu. It was a mountaintop city that may have been home to about 1,000 people. Many buildings there were temples. The city may have been a religious center. Cuzco was the Inca capital. About A.D. 1200, the Inca civilization was not very large. But by conquering some neighboring peoples and forming alliances with others, the empire became huge.

An Empire Is Born

A man named Pachacuti may have been the main reason the Inca built a huge empire. In 1438 a people called the Chancas attacked the Inca. The Inca ruler, Viracocha, ran away. But one of his sons, Pachacuti, stayed to fight. Pachacuti defeated the Chancas and became the Inca emperor, or ruler. He expanded the Inca territory by conquering nearby peoples. Conquered men became Inca soldiers. The Inca army grew in size and strength. Pachacuti also was a great builder. Under his leadership many buildings went up in Cuzco. In 1471 Pachacuti's son, Topa Inca, became emperor. Topa Inca conquered many peoples in the region. He nearly doubled the size of the Inca Empire.

Empire Builders

The huge Inca Empire held together because of smart government. When the Inca conquered a people, they allowed the old ruler to stay in power as long as he was loyal to the Inca. Conquered rulers then had little reason

to fight the Inca, although they did pay taxes to the Inca. The Inca government carefully watched over the people in the empire. There was a chain of command. It included the ministers of the empire, the traveling inspectors, and the governors of the provinces. Each governor was in charge of about 10,000 Inca subjects, as well as other government workers. When the emperor gave an order, it went down the chain of command to everyone in the empire. The Inca never developed a system of writing. But they did use **quipu**, or knotted cords, to keep records for many things. We have learned about the Inca government from quipu. The Inca also were good stoneworkers. They cut stones and fit them together so well that they did not need to use cement.

Inca Roads

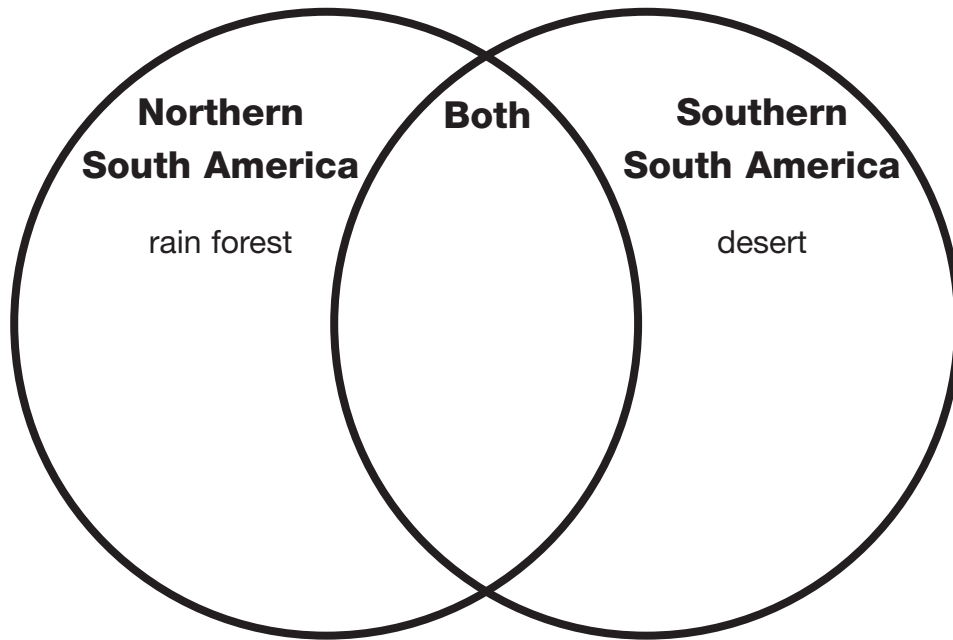
The Inca built excellent roads. In fact, they built more than 14,000 miles of roads to link together the empire. The Inca did not use wheels to move things, so their roads did not have to be of a certain width. Some roads were not much more than footpaths. Others were wide and paved. Inca roads were used by only the government and army. Some roads are still around today.

The Inca Legacy

The Inca Empire did not last very long. Yet their ruins show us that their cities were magnificent. In 1527 civil war broke out in the Inca Empire. Just as the war was ending, the Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro arrived. He had only 167 men. But he did have horses and guns. This helped him conquer the already weakened Inca Empire.

Lesson 1: Review

1.  **Compare and Contrast** Complete the diagram below.



2. What world record is held by the Andes Mountains?

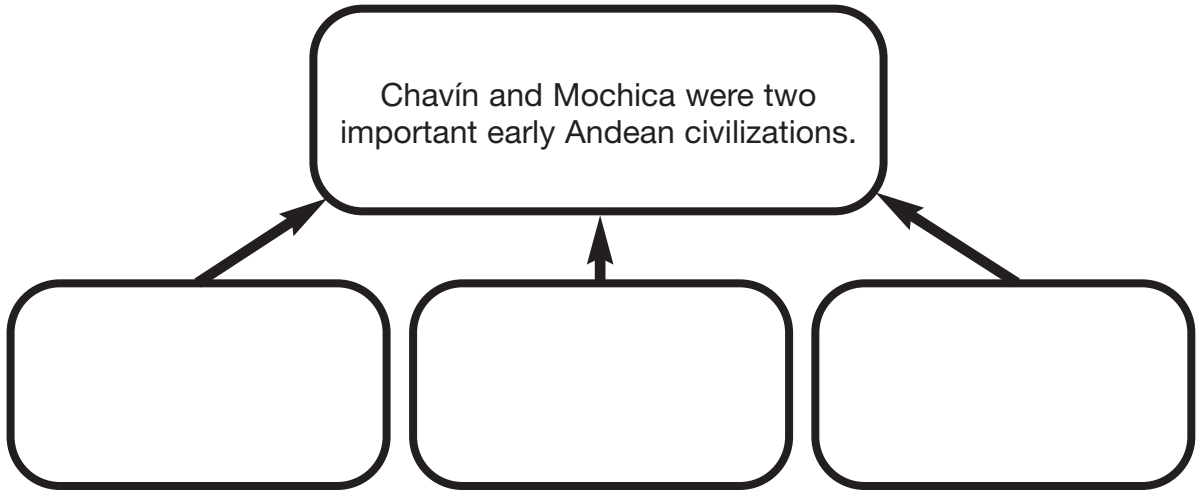
3. Why did ancient peoples settle near Lake Titicaca?

4. What are several types of landscapes that can be found in South America? Use the word **biome** in your answer.

5. **Critical Thinking: Make Generalizations** In which part of South America do you think it would be easiest for people to live? Why?

Lesson 2: Review

1. **Main Idea and Details** Complete the diagram below.



2. Where did the Chavín and Mochica live?

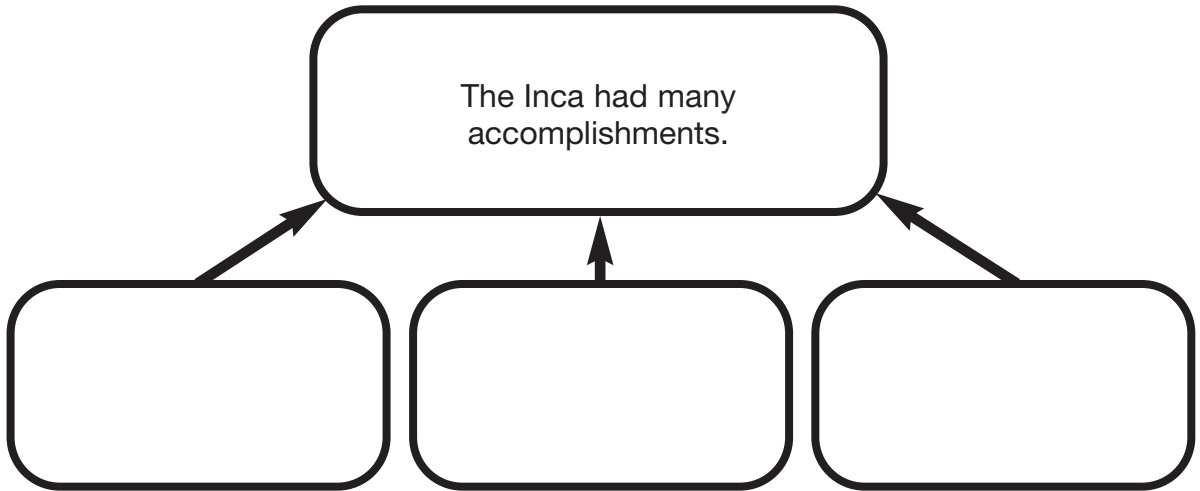
3. Describe Chavín art and explain how it has helped us learn about Chavín culture.

4. How do we know about the Chavín and the Mochica?

5. **Critical Thinking: Accuracy of Information** Do the artifacts that archaeologists have found tell us how the Chavín and Mochica disappeared? Explain your answer.

Lesson 3: Review

1. **Main Idea and Details** List some of the main accomplishments of the Inca in the boxes below.



2. Who was Pachacuti?

3. What was the Inca capital?

4. How did the Inca system of government help hold the empire together? Use the word **quipu** in your answer.

5. **Critical Thinking: Make Inferences** Do you think the Inca roads would have been built differently if the Inca had used wheels for transport? Explain your answer.
