



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1994 Volume III: Understanding the Ancient Americas: Foundation, Flourishing, and Survival

Aztec Mythology

Curriculum Unit 94.03.03
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This unit is written for fourth and fifth grade students in the Talented and Gifted Program. These are students who have been identified through a multi-criteria screening process to be in the top five percent of their grade. They come to me once a week for a full day. Included within that day is what is referred to as the “core curriculum.” The “core” for fourth and fifth graders was originally the study of the Middle Ages and was traditional in its European-centeredness. In 1992, I used my participation in the Yale Teachers Institute to broaden this curriculum by writing a unit that looked at West Africa, the Aztec culture, and Medieval Europe. The major focus of that unit was to allow students, through research and class room activities, to compare and contrast the three cultures. This unit will build upon the previous unit by exploring the mythology of the Aztecs.

All students in the Talented and Gifted Program, in either the fourth or fifth grade, also study Greek Mythology. Thus, this unit will build upon and enhance that year’s core curriculum. Wherever possible, I will provide opportunities for students to compare and contrast not just the Aztec culture with African and European, but with their previous knowledge of Greek mythology as well.

Part I—The Aztec Religion

In order for teachers to present the mythology of the Aztecs to students, they need an understanding of the basics of the Aztec religion. The religion of the Aztecs is polytheistic. Some of the religion’s gods had been known in Mexico for many years; others were adopted from the religions of the people the Aztecs conquered. The Aztec religion is one in which the practitioners were constantly trying to win the favor of the gods—to influence the gods to look favorably upon them (Bray 1968: 152). This was done through offerings to the gods—human and otherwise.

The Aztecs believed that it took four attempts at creating the earth and mankind before the gods finally got everything right with the fifth attempt. The first creation took place when Black Tezcatlipoca (tes kah tlee POH kah), one of the four sons of the Lord and Lady of Duality, Ometecuhtli (oh may tay COO tlee) and Omecihuatl (oh may SEE wahtl) respectively, changed himself into the sun. The earth at that time was inhabited by giants who ate acorns, berries and roots. Tezoatlipoca’s rival, Quetzalcoatl(ket sahl KO ahtl), couldn’t stand the fact that Tezcatlipoca was ruling the universe, so he knocked him out of the sky. In his rage at being knocked out

of the sky, Tezcatlipoca turned into a jaguar and destroyed the earth.

Attempt number two began when Quetzalcoatl took over the heavens. He created people on earth who ate pine nuts. Tezoatlipoca overthrew Quetzalcoatl and destroyed the earth with a great wind. The few people who were left on earth were changed into monkeys.

The third creation began when Tlaloc (TLAHL lock), the god of rain, became the sun. Quetzalcoatl sent rain which flooded the earth, killing almost all mankind. Those who did survive were turned into birds.

When Chalchiuhtlicue (chahl chee oo TLEE kway), the water goddess, took over the sun's responsibilities, the fourth creation had begun. This time, however, the earth was destroyed by flood and those men who survived became fish.

The final creation (the fifth sun) occurred when the gods met and decided one among them had to sacrifice himself to become the new sun. One poor, humble god did this and became the sun. However, the sun hung in the sky and didn't move. In order for the sun to move, it was necessary for all of the gods to sacrifice themselves. Once the sun was moving across the sky, it was Quetzalcoatl who took on the responsibility of creating mankind. He did this by going to the underworld to bring back to earth the bones of past generations. While fleeing the god of the underworld with his bag of bones, he slipped and fell, breaking the bones. He sprinkled the pieces of one with his blood and turned them into men. Because the pieces of bone were all different sizes, the men and women he created were all different sizes, too (Bray 1968: 154). While there are different variations of this account, in all versions, each creation brings man and food closer to the ideal of mankind (Caso 1958: 16). This is a wonderful story to present to children, and a longer version of this myth that I have rewritten is included later in this unit.

The Aztecs believed in a heaven and an underworld. There were thirteen levels of heaven and nine of the underworld. There were also four horizontal points which corresponded to the directions of the compass and were associated with the four creator gods. All beings were assigned to one of these four points, depending on the day one was born. The earth was believed to be a large disc surrounded by water at the point where the horizontal and vertical met. The Lord and Lady of Duality, mentioned earlier also were the rulers of this central point (Bray 1968: 155).

The Aztecs believed that where you went after death depended upon what you did on earth and how you died. The eastern paradise, the "house of the sun" was the home of the souls of warrior who were killed in combat. This also included the souls of enemy warriors who had a special "god of the enemy dead." Sacrificed victims went there also. It was believed that souls stayed in the eastern paradise for four years, and then they returned to earth as hummingbirds or other exotic birds.

The western paradise, the house of corn, was believed to be for women who died in childbirth. They also returned to earth as phantoms of bad omens. The paradise of Tlaloc, the southern paradise was for people who died of lightning, leprosy or other sickness. This was a place of plentiful food.

The paradise of the north was for the rest of the dead. It was called Mictlan (MEEK tlahn) and getting there involved going through nine trials and took four years to accomplish.

The Aztec accounts of the trials a soul must go through to get to Mictlan are as follows:

- 1) cross a deep river—dogs were buried with their dead owners to guide them on this journey.
- 2) pass between two mountains which were joined together
- 3) climb an obsidian mountain
- 4) pass through icy wind that cut like a knife
- 5) pass through a place where flags waved
- 6) be pierced by arrows
- 7) pass among wild beasts which ate human hearts
- 8) pass over a narrow path of stone
- 9) reach this level where the soul found rest.

In order to make this trip, people were buried in a squatting position with items to help them on the way. These included water, the dog (tawny in color) mentioned at the first level of hell, a jade bead to act as the dead's heart at the seventh hell and other personal objects to give to Mictlantecuhtli (meek tlahn tay COO flee), god of the dead, or Mictecacihuatl (meek tay kah SEE wahtl), mistress of the underworld, when they got to the ninth region.

There were thirteen heavens. Ometecuhtli and Omecihuatl, the creator gods, lived in the double twelfth and thirteenth heavens. It was believed that the souls of babies went there as well as the souls of men waiting to be reincarnated upon the destruction of the human race (Caso 1958: 64).

Agriculture was the primary focus of the Aztec religion and the forces of water and earth were directly related to agricultural fertility. The Aztecs saw human life metaphorically—like maize or a flower. Man was born to die, but carried the seed of reproduction (Miller and Taube 1993: 31). Therefore, ceremonies dealt with life—not afterlife—to ensure health, fertility and to avoid natural disasters.

As mentioned earlier, the Aztec religion was one of constant effort to propitiate the gods in order that they might look favorably upon mankind. The Aztecs, through their religious practices, endeavored to keep a balance in nature. One religious practice to accomplish this was human sacrifice.

The sacrificing of humans was looked upon as a pay back to the gods (Miller and Taube 1993: 30). Just as corn might be sacrificed to Tlaloc, the rain god, in thanks for that season's harvest and to ensure future crops, so humans would be sacrificed to the gods to ensure the continuation of the human race. Sacrifice was considered a necessity for the welfare of man. Those sacrificed were considered messengers to the gods, not victims.

It is difficult to present Aztec mythology or really any aspect of the Aztec culture without addressing the subject of human sacrifice with students. I have found that students are able to handle this subject well

enough as long as some of the gorier specifics are left out. Just as my fourth and fifth grade students can read about the young Greek who were to be sacrificed to the minotaur in the story of “Perseus and the Minotaur”, so these students can learn that sacrifice was a part of the Aztec religion. I explain it as I have in the preceding paragraph, using the same examples. I do not go into any more detail than that, even though I know that these students are the “Terminator 2” generation. I do not feel the specific details of sacrifice or blood letting is appropriate or necessary for my students in their understanding of the Aztec culture at this point in their educations.

Part II—The Mythology

Just as the griots of Africa and the balladeers of medieval Europe passed their stories along orally, so too, the Aztecs passed along the accounts of their gods and goddesses orally. The myths depended on word of mouth although some were recorded in codices. The stories were often sung and accompanied by drums. Often there were mask wearing dancers, pantomime or stage props. The story tellers strung the stories together into epics (Bierhorst 1984: 17). These practices continued until the conquest when the stories were written down by missionary friars and Aztec nobility who had learned Spanish. The purpose of writing down the stories was not so much to preserve them as to refute them with Christianity. The friars thought that the more they learned about the Aztec religion, the better they would be able to work against it. There were, however, those who were interested in the religion simply because they had a quest for knowledge of the world (Bierhorst 1984: 3). It is important to relate this to my students. My goals for them are to foster this same quest for knowledge in order that they better understand their world and the people around them.

The following are three myths that I have rewritten for my students based on my research on the Aztec religion and the culture of the Aztecs. They are the myths upon which my lesson plans in this unit are based.

The Mark of the Rabbit

On a clear evening long ago, the sun was setting as Obsidian Snake sat quietly outside his home. He had eaten his maize cakes during the hottest part of the day and soon he would sleep. Inside his house, he could hear the sounds of his brother, Smoking Shield, moving about before he returned to the Telpochcalli (tail poch CAL ee), the House of Youth, for the night. Each evening Smoking Shield returned home to eat his meal only to return, after bathing, to the House of Youth where he learned to be a model citizen and warrior of the Aztec state. Obsidian Snake missed his brother, especially late at night, when he awoke from sleep on his reed mat and did not hear the sound of his brother’s breathing on the mat beside him. Right now Obsidian Snake was too young to go the House of Youth. He was taught by his father during the day—how to fish, gather sticks for the fire, and how to handle their canoe. At the House of Youth, Smoking Shield was learning how to be a good citizen, obedient and respectful, and to be a model warrior, too. Obsidian Snake knew that soon he too would sleep at the House of Youth, coming home only for his meals and to bathe.

At his back, the adobe bricks of his house were still warm even though the sun had ended its journey across the sky. It was the growing time when days were warm and dry and the maize was on its way to harvest. All the family prayed to Tlaloc, the old god of rain and the god of the farmer’s plenty, in order to be sure rain came as needed along with plenty of warmth and sunshine.

Inside, too, he could hear the sounds of his mother, Turquoise Maize Flower, as she moved around the hearth.

The fire glowed quietly through the open doorway. Obsidian Snake smiled as he thought of her. In his mind he could hear the sound of her grinding the maize for their two meals. He could hear the slap slap sound as she patted maize dough into tortillas. All day his mother had worked at grinding maize between volcanic stones, preparing flour for the maize cakes and the maize porridge she sweetened for him with honey. Today, their afternoon meal had included crayfish his father and he had caught in the lake nearby their house.

His mother also spent many hours spinning cotton thread and weaving at her loom. Throughout the area, his mother's cotton cloth was known to be fine and soft. It brought a good price in cacao beans on market day.

Obsidian Snake thought of the way his mother had smiled when he had presented her with the crayfish he had caught. He knew his mother missed him now that he was too old to stay by her side as she worked by the hearth inside or wove her fine cotton outside in the small courtyard of their house. That was why each night she found her way to him for a few moments. Tonight he heard the sound of her bare feet as she crossed the beaten earth floor and entered the darkness outside the house.

"Look, Obsidian Snake," said Turquoise Maize Flower. "The moon is making its way across the sky. We can see the marks of the rabbit which it wears. With the next full moon, it will be time to harvest our maize.

"Why does the moon wear the mark of a rabbit, Mother?" Obsidian Snake asked.

Just as he could see the white of his mother's cueitl (kway eetl) that was wrapped around her waist and hips and fell to her ankles, in the soft darkness of the moon's light, Obsidian Snake could see her smile as she sat down beside him, ready to answer his question.

"Four times, Obsidian Snake, the gods had tried to create our earth and our people and four times they had found their efforts wanting. Each time the world was destroyed—by great jaguar, by flood, by wind and by rain. With each destruction, too, went the sun. Finally, the gods met in Teotihuacan (tay oh tee WAH cun) and decided that one among them would be sacrificed and changed into the sun.

There were two volunteers; one god was rich and handsome, the other god was ugly and covered with sores. When the time for sacrifice came, the rich, handsome god ran to the edge of the sacrificial fire but stopped at the edge, unable to take the final step into the fire. Four times he tried and four times his courage failed him.

Next it was the turn of the poor, ugly god. Even though he was thought to be a poor second choice, with no hesitation he jumped into the middle of the fire. The handsome god, embarrassed and ashamed by his cowardice, finally jumped into the fire. He, too, was devoured. Just then the jaguar, mighty animal, jumped into the ashes of the fire. When he came out, his coat was spotted with soot and so it remains to this day.

Time passed and even though the gods had been sacrificed, there was still no sun. Suddenly, the sun appeared in the sky. Right then too, came the moon, shining as brightly as the sun. By now, the gods had lost their patience. Angered by the boldness of the moon, they slapped the moon right in the face with a rabbit. Those are the marks of that rabbit that we are looking at right now."

"And what happened next, my mother?" asked Obsidian Snake. Did the gods succeed in making our world and our people?"

"My son, it took a lot more of the gods to be sacrificed. When they did, they created the stars. It was Quetzalcoatl though, the Plumed Serpent, who visited the gods of the underworld to get the bones of past generations to create mankind. But that, Obsidian Snake, is another story for another night. The moon, with

its rabbit marks, has traveled far across the sky. Tomorrow's sun will be here to wake us soon enough. Let us go to our mats now and sleep."

Quetzalcoatl and the Creation of Man

On this night, Obsidian Snake waited impatiently for the sound of his mother finishing her day's work. All day long, as he had gathered wood for fire and helped his father work their fields of maize, he had thought of Turquoise Maize Flower's words from the night before. Soon the moon would rise up in the sky and he smiled as he thought of the moon's surprise and embarrassment when the gods whacked it with a rabbit because it shone as brightly as the sun. Now it knew its proper place and shone dimly in the night sky, still wearing the mark of the rabbit.

"What happened next," wondered Obsidian Snake? "I know how the sun and moon came to be. How did mankind get here?"

As if reading his mind, his mother quietly appeared beside him. He knew she was tired as she had woven much cloth to be sold at the market place in Tenochtitlan and would welcome the chance to sit quietly with him for awhile.

"How did we get here?" asked Obsidian Snake as his mother took her place beside him in the cool, dry night.

"We are the children of Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent," his mother began. "He is our creator; he discovered maize so that we might feed ourselves. He taught us how to find jade and other precious stones and taught us how to polish them. From him the art of weaving our many colored cotton cloth was learned and passed down from mother to daughter for many generations. The Plumed Serpent taught our people how to use the feathers of the quetzal, the hummingbird and other birds with colorful plumage to make beautiful designs. He also taught our people how to measure time. He gave us our calendar with its special days set aside for certain prayers and festivals.

But that is the end of my story, Obsidian Snake. It begins after the creation of the fifth sun when Quetzalcoatl went to the lord of the dead, Mictlantecuhtli, to ask for bones from dead men with which to create new men. When Mictlantecuhtli gave a bag of bones to Quetzalcoatl, he immediately began to run with them because he had been told that the lord of the dead was not to be trusted. As Quetzalcoatl was running, he slipped and fell, breaking all the bones in the bag and spilling them about. He was still able to gather them up and escape from Mictlan, the underworld. Once safe, Quetzalcoatl mixed his blood with the bones and created a new breed of men. Since the bones that had fallen broke into different sizes, that meant that the people he created were all different sizes. That is why, Obsidian Snake, when you look around you, you can see that no two people are exactly the same. It's because of our creator, the Plumed Serpent, and the bones that got broken.

Now, having created man and being a kindly god, Quetzalcoatl realized he needed to find a way to feed his new creation. One day he spotted a big black ant with a kernel of corn. This, he knew, would be the perfect food to feed mankind. To find out where the ant got the corn, Quetzalcoatl turned himself into an ant and followed the black ant to a mountain. In a crack in this mountain Quetzalcoatl saw not only corn but beans, peppers, sage, and other kinds of food fit for mankind. Quetzalcoatl, still in the body of an ant, squeezed through the crack, took a kernel of corn and dragged it back to man so that man could plant it for food. Quetzalcoatl realized that there was much more food beside corn in the mountain which could be used to feed mankind. He asked the other gods what to do with the mountain. They said to split the mountain open to give the food to mankind, and so one of them did. This, however, angered Tlaloc, the rain god who, with his

children, stole the beans, corn, peppers, and sage from within the mountain before it could be given to man.

So it is today that Tlaloc and his children still have the food that was in the mountain. Each year they give part of the food back to man, some years more than others.

And that is why, my son, Obsidian Snake, we sacrifice to both our creator and protector Quetzalcoatl, and to the rain god Tlaloc, so that they will continue to look upon our people with kindness and keep our world in balance. Without them our crops and our people will perish.”

With those words, Turquoise Maize Flower stopped and smiled down at Obsidian Snake. He leaned against his mother and could feel his eyes beginning to grow heavy in the quiet cool of the night. Even in his sleepiness, he knew these were the accounts that had been told to her by her mother and father and these were the accounts that one day he would share with his children on dry, clear evenings when the moon with its rabbit markings looked down on them.

Tezcatlipoca and the King of Tula

As Obsidian Snake lay on his reed mat, he awoke to the sound of Turquoise Maize Flower and Speaking Eagle, his mother and father, moving about preparing for the day. Through his squinting eyes he could see that it was still very dark outside. He could smell the wood smoke of the fire his mother had rekindled and heard scraping sounds as she ground maize for tortillas. Outside, his father moved around in the darkness searching for a few more sticks for the fire. Why, he wondered, are mother and father awake so early? Suddenly his eyes opened wide as he remembered that today was market day. Before the sun came back around to light up the day, he and his mother and father would be on their way to the market to sell the many fine cloths Turquoise Maize Flower had woven.

Obsidian Snake loved the market where people crowded together to bargain with the women who sat behind their piles of peppers, onions, maize, beans, fruits, animal furs, cocoa and pottery. There would be others there ready to trade wood for building and frogs to eat that had come from the lake. Obsidian Snake especially liked to look at the obsidian mirrors whose polished black surfaces would shine in the sunlight. When he looked at them he could see the reflections of a small brown face framed in straight black hair whose eyes squinted when smiling and whose cheeks were round and full. Perhaps at the market he would see Eagle Snake, son of his mother’s sister, and together they could travel through the rows and rows of goods for sale. If his mother sold her cloths, perhaps he would be able to buy tamales or spicy maize porridge.

Soon night was fading away and Obsidian Snake was on his way to the market, his mother’s cloths tied securely to his back. Speaking Eagle and Turquoise Maize Flower both carried cloths, too. As they walked, Speaking Eagle began to talk, his quiet voice carrying in the early morning silence.

“Our trip today reminds me of a story that took place in another market place a long time ago. This is a story about Tezcatlipoca, the Mirror that Smokes, the god of the night sky. He is a sorcerer and the god of evil. What happened, Obsidian Snake, was that Tezoatlipoca, turned himself into a wild, crazy man who walked naked around the city of Tula’s marketplace selling chili peppers.

At this same time, the king of Tula had a beautiful daughter who was sought after by many men. The king, however, would not let her marry any of them. One day, however, the daughter saw the chili pepper man in the market and immediately fell in love with him. Day after day, she yearned so much for a glimpse of the wild man that she became sick. The king, who loved his daughter very much and could not stand to see her so

sick, had all of his men search for the chili pepper man. Finally they found him, wild and dirty, in the market place right where the king's daughter had first seen him. They took him back to the king where he was washed, given new clothes and made to look very presentable. When the princess saw the chili pepper man again, she was immediately cured of her illness. The king was so happy to see his daughter well again that he gave his daughter to the man to be married."

With this, Speaking Eagle stopped walking and talking and paused on the road to adjust his bundle of cloths. "That is not the end of the story, Obsidian Snake," he said as he once again began walking towards the market. "It turned out that the people of Tula had started laughing at the king for allowing his daughter to be married to a crazy man.. The king, of course, was embarrassed and did not like being laughed at. He began plotting a way to get rid of his new son-in-law.

Here is the plan he devised. He had his men take the chili pepper man to fight in a war against Tula's enemies. They put the man in charge of some dwarfs, thinking that when the fighting started and the king's men left, he would be killed. However, when the fighting did started, the pepper man encouraged the dwarfs with inspiring words and before long, the pepper man and the dwarfs had killed all of the enemy.

When word of the chili pepper man's victory got back to the king of Tula, the king knew he had to greet his son-in-law as a hero when he returned from the battle. This time, when the pepper man entered the market place, people danced and sang songs of praise instead of laughing at him. At the palace of the king, the people crowned him with a headdress made of quetzal feathers and gave him a turquoise shield. The king announced that the people of Tula had been satisfied and that the one-time wild chili pepper man was indeed his son-in-law."

Speaking Eagle stopped and pointed down the road. "Tezcatlipoca continued to work his sorcery against the people of Tula and even some of the other gods," he began again. "But I will have to save those stories for another time. Look, Obsidian Snake, the market place is just ahead."

Lesson Plan I

Copy and have the class read "The Mark of the Rabbit" that is included in this unit. Be sure to show students a photograph of the moon so they can see the rabbit markings for themselves.

Discuss and define the term creation myth in the context of this myth and any other myths the class may have read previously.

Ask students to individually list the questions about nature and the world around the Aztecs that were being answered in this myth. As a group, list student responses on the board. Some examples of appropriate responses are:

What are the marks that we see on the moon?

How did the marks get there? How did the sun and moon come to be?

Why is the sun brighter than the moon? How did the jaguar get its spots How did the stars come to be?

Once these responses have been listed, ask students to choose one or two questions and write their own myth that answers them.

Other myths with which to use this same questioning technique are “Possum Steals Fire” in *World Myths and Legends II* and “Quetzalcoatl and the Creation of Man” which is included in this unit.

Lesson Plan II

Copy from this unit and have students read “Tezcatlipoca and the King of Tula”.

Discuss how this myth differs from a creation myth. Point out that it is a story about the god Tezcatlipoca and even though he is a sorcerer, it falls under the category of hero myths.

Ask students if there is other information about Aztec life that we can learn from this myth. What similarities or differences between life in Aztec time and life now can students discover. Some examples of appropriate responses might be:

Today most fathers do not “give” their daughters to a man to be married.

Today there are still wars, just as there were then.

Today we get most of our food from supermarkets.

Divide students into groups of three or four and, using the books listed in the student bibliography, have students research information about the Aztec marketplace.

Have students use the information from their research to make dioramas or models of an Aztec market.

Additional stories about Tezcatlipoca can be found in *The Hungry Woman*. “The Flight of Quetzalcoatl” is a myth in which Tezcatlipoca uses his sorcery against his rival Quetzalcoatl to drive him away from Tula. It is appropriate for fourth and fifth grade students.

Lesson Plan III

Copy and read “Quetzalcoatl and the Creation of Man” that is a part of this unit.

Ask students to list the questions about Aztec life and the world around them that are answered in this story. (See Lesson Plan I)

Define and discuss the meaning of the word “agriculture.”

Discuss why agriculture is so important to the Aztecs and their religion.

Divide students into small groups of three or four. Using the books listed in the students’ bibliography, have students research the food of the Aztecs.

Discuss the similarities and differences between the food that the Aztecs eat and the food that we eat today.

As a class, plan and prepare an Aztec meal.

Read the Nigerian folktale *Why the Sky is Far Away* by Mary-Joan Gerson. This myth is also about food and answers the question why people grow their food. Have students compare and contrast these two stories.

Additional Activities

Visit the Yale Art Gallery to look at the Mesoamerican collection. The docents at the gallery are very knowledgeable and are always willing to work with teachers on specific topics. Of special interest to students would be the statue of Tlaloc, the rain god; the sculpture of the Aztec ball game and the actual equipment worn in the game; and the pots that held the Aztec or Maya chocolate drink. After visiting the art gallery, students can create their own sculptures of Aztecs gods using clay, paper mache, or plaster cast.

Visit the Peabody Museum to look at the Aztec Calendar Stone that is on display there. Students can read, or have read to them, the complete creation story that includes the creation of the five suns and then look at the carvings on the stone. A concise description of the creations can be found in *Everyday Life of the Aztecs* by Warwick Bray.

Have students keep an ongoing list of the Aztec gods that are encountered in their reading. The list should include the Aztec name of the god, a phonetic pronunciation, the English translation of the name, any identifying attributes, and the god's areas of responsibility or "job".

Students can be asked to illustrate any of the myths used in this unit. The illustrations in Alfonso Caso's *The Aztecs* would be helpful to students with this project. Students will also need to conduct research in order to accurately portray Aztec clothing, housing, market places, etc. The books listed in the student bibliography will be helpful.

Student Bibliography

Berden, Frances F. *The Aztecs* . New York: Chelsea House, 1989. A well illustrated readable description of the Aztec culture.

Bray, Warwick. *Everyday Life of the Aztecs* . New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1968. A comprehensive description of the Aztecs that is readable by younger students.

Defrates, Joanna. *What Do We Know About the Aztecs?* New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1993. A well illustrated book that answers basic questions about Aztec life. Its question and answer format makes it easy to use for young researchers.

Foss, Flora. *World Myths and Legends II Mexico* . Belmont: Fearon/Janus/ Quercus, 1993. An introduction to the myths and legends of Mexico. Very readable by fourth or fifth grade students.

Gerson, Mary-Joan. *Why the Sky is Far Away* . Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974. A Nigerian folktale that teaches respect for the earth and sky.

Green, John. *Life in Ancient Mexico* . New York: Dover, 1991. A coloring book. Each page's caption contains information about the life of the Olmec, Maya and Aztec.

Nougier, Louis-Rene. *The Days of the Mamas. Aztecs and Incas* . Morristown: Silver Burdett, 1985. Well illustrated with good information about pre-Columbian Mexico, Central and South America.

Teacher Bibliography

Bierhorst, John, ed. *The Hungry Woman* . New York: Quill, William Morrow, 1984. Aztec myths. Has an informative introduction and illustrations by sixteenth century Aztec artists.

Carrasco, David. *Religions of Mesoamerica* . San Francisco: Harper, 1970. Describes Aztec religion in detail, as well as Olmec, Maya, and religion after the conquest.

Caso, Alfonso. *The Aztecs* . Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958. A comprehensive description of Aztec gods and religion. Readable by students, also, and especially helpful for its illustrations.

Clendennin, Inga. *Aztecs: An Interpretation* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Particularly helpful for its information about women and children, as well as all other aspects of Aztec daily living.

Miller, Mary and Taube, Karl. *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* . London: Thomas and Hudson, 1993. An illustrated dictionary of Mesoamerican religion. The introduction contains a good overview of Mesoamerican religions.

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