

THE INCAS

The early history of the Incas is a mystery. Since the Incas never developed a system of writing, we must rely on the writings of their Spanish conquerors for any Incan history that we know. We can also study artifacts of the ancient cities for clues to the early Incas' story.

We do know some Incan myths. One early story is that the sun god created the first Incan, Manco Capac, and his sister. The god told them to go and teach other Indians. They went into the wilderness to establish a city. They named their city Cuzco, and it became the capital of the Incan empire.

The Incas probably began as one of many small tribes in the Andes Mountains. At its peak, the Incan empire spread through parts of what are now Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina. The Incan land included desert, fertile valleys, some rain forests, and the Andes Mountains.

The Incas conquered most of their territory under the leadership of Pachacutec, who ruled from 1438 to 1471. The Incas crushed most of the other tribes during brutal fighting.

The Incan empire was so large that they built a system of roads that stretched over 12,000 miles. The Incas did not use wheeled vehicles on their roads. The great road system was for pedestrians. Only the road system of the ancient Romans was equal to that of the Incas.

The Incas developed terrace farming. They cut terraces into the steep sides of the mountains to create more farm land. They also dug irrigation systems to bring water from the mountain streams to the terraces. Many of the Incan roads, terraces, and irrigation ditches are still in use today.

The llama was an important animal for the Incas. They tamed the llama and used it for transportation of men and materials. The llama also provided the Incas with wool and food.

The Incas developed a counting system that used a based of ten. They used a *quipus* to remember numbers. The quipus had a main cord about two feet long. They tied many colored strings to the main cord. Each string had knots tied in it. The color of the strings and the distance between the knots had special meanings.

The Incan civilization was at its peak when the Spanish arrived. Francisco Pizarro led the Spanish invaders against the Incas. After a series of fierce battles, the Spanish defeated the Incan king, Atahualpa, and in 1533 he was killed. The descendants of the Incas, like those of the Mayas and Aztecs, continued to live under the rule of the Spanish.



The Incas conquered a vast empire in South America, constructed a 12,000-mile road system, and developed terrace farming and irrigation systems.

Name _____ Date _____

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Why is so little known about the early history of the Incas?

2. According to legend, who was the first Incan?

3. What was the capital of the Incan empire named?

4. Where is it believed that the Incan tribe began?

5. Under whose reign did the Incan empire grow most?

6. What did the size of the empire compel the Incas to do?

7. How did the Incas grow crops in the mountains?

8. How was the llama beneficial to the Incas?

9. What Incan invention helped with counting?

10. Who defeated the Incas?
