

Teacher Materials

Who Were the Inka?

Lesson Components

Thematic Exploration: Geography, Ways of Living, History

Theme 1: Geography of the Inka Empire

Image	Description
	<p>Locator Map: Use this map to find the location and extent of the Inka Empire.</p>
	<p>“Fly-out” Video Animation: Take a virtual trip from Cusco, the capital of the Inka Empire, to the four <i>suyus</i>¹ of the empire. Learn about the Great Inka Road’s vital importance to the empire.</p>

¹ The meaning of suyu [pronounced SOO yoo] in the Quechua language is “region.”

Who Were the Inka?

Theme 1: Geography of the Inka Empire

Image	Description
	<p>Interactive Tool with Images: View photo galleries of the Inka Empire. Each of the four suyus had diverse populations, environments, and resources.</p>

Theme 2: Inka Ways of Living

Image	Description
	<p>Inka Origin Story: View a narrated slide show that tells the creation story of the Inka. Look for examples of community values represented in the story.</p>
	<p>Inka Astronomy Interactive "Milky Way—The Road in the Sky:" Use this interactive tool to find important Inka constellations that connect to ways of living in the Andes.</p>

Who Were the Inka?

Theme 2: Inka Ways of Living

Image	Description
 <p>A lithograph illustration titled "SESTA CALLE CORO TASQVE". It depicts an Inka man in traditional clothing carrying a large pack on a llama. A small dog is walking alongside them. The drawing is in a simple, line-art style.</p>	<p>Lithographs Slideshow: Explore the detailed drawings of Inka life near the time of the Spanish invasion by the renowned Inka illustrator, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala.</p>

Theme 3: Inka History

Image	Description
 <p>A lithograph illustration titled "DADAHVA". It shows an Inka man in traditional attire holding a staff and a banner. The drawing is in a simple, line-art style.</p>	<p>Inka Timeline: Investigate images, photographs, and NMAI collection objects that span from ancestor cultures to the present day. Learn about the four Inka ancestor cultures, the Spanish invasion, and how descendant cultures carry on the legacy of the Inka Empire.</p>

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Additional Sources

- “The Inka Empire—Tawantinsuyu:” An essay offering additional background and context.
- **Resistance and Adaptation:** Images, videos, and text showcasing the resiliency of Inka descendant cultures in the Andes today.
- **The Inka Empire’s Impact on the World:** Examples of how Inka foods, minerals, medicines, and engineering have affected our world.
- **Inka Innovation in Masonry:** 3D viewer interactives showcasing Inka innovations in stone work.

Student Worksheet

- [Who Were the Inka?](#)

Connection to the Compelling Question

- The Inka built a sophisticated and vast empire that they called Tawantinsuyu to integrate and support diverse communities in challenging geographical environments. Students learn about the geography, ways of living, and history of the Inka through a thematic exploration that introduces them to the Inka Empire and how innovation was a hallmark of the empire.

Ideas

Thematic Exploration: Geography, Ways of Living, History

Students investigate aspects of the Inka Empire through three themes. Consider structuring the investigation as a jigsaw followed by a whole class sharing and discussion of highlights from each theme.

- Groups of 3–6: Each student or student pair is assigned a set of sources.
- Each student or student pair reviews the sources and completes their section of the graphic organizer, *Who Were the Inka?*
- Following the thematic source analysis, lead a whole class sharing and discussion to check for understanding of each thematic element.
- Students work in small groups to complete the remaining sections of the organizer. Each student or student pair shares their findings for the set of sources assigned.
- Individually, students complete the formative task: A written summary of the Inka Empire.

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Suggested Lesson Procedure

Hook

- Three themes that students will use to learn more about the Inka Empire and culture:
 - **Geography:** Study of the terrain.
 - **Ways of Living:** Beliefs, daily practices, and traditions.
 - **History:** Study of past events.

Thematic Source Exploration

- Divide class into small groups (3-6 students/group)
- One student or student pair is assigned a set of sources:
 - **Geography:** Map showing the location and extent of the Inka Empire in South America, “fly-out” topography video, and interactive photo gallery of the suyus.
 - **Ways of Living:** The Inka Origin Story; Inka astronomy interactive; and lithographs from an Inka chronicler at the time of the Spanish invasion.
 - **History:** A timeline with images and photos of key events in Inka history, spanning from the Inka ancestor cultures to the present.
- Each student or student pair uses the *Source Investigation Questions* in the graphic organizer to analyze the set of sources assigned (Geography, Ways of Living, or History).
- Students answer questions on the graphic organizer, *Who Were the Inka?* (Part A).
- Students return to their small group and share their responses. Consider leading a class discussion and check for students’ understanding of each thematic element.
- Students or student pairs work in their small groups to complete the remaining sections in Part A of the graphic organizer and share their findings.

Summary: Who Were the Inka?

- Individually, students use the graphic organizer to complete the formative task of crafting a written summary that answers the question, “Who were the Inka?” (Part B).

Wrap Up

- Students share and discuss written summaries.
- Extension: Compare summaries with the essay “The Inka Empire—Tawantinsuyu.”

Next: Students consider how the Inka used innovation to build an extensive road system.