Name _____ Date _____

The Maya, Aztec and Inca: Three American Civilizations

Directions: Read the passage about three civilizations of the Americas. Then use the table along with the passage to answer the questions.

Comparing the Maya, Aztec and Inca

Cities, Lakes and Mountain Roads

Before Europeans arrived, powerful civilizations rose in the Americas. Three of the best known are the Maya, the Aztec and the Inca. Each one built its own way of life in a very different land.

The **Maya** lived in rainforest lowlands and mountain highlands in parts of what are now Mexico and Central America. Their Classic period lasted from about 250 to 900 CE. The Maya never formed one empire. Instead, they lived in many city-states, such as the great rivals Tikal and Calakmul. Maya scribes carved **hieroglyphs**, signs for words and sounds, on stone monuments. The Maya did not disappear. Millions of Maya people live in the region today.

The Aztec called themselves the **Mexica**. In about 1325, they founded their capital, **Tenochtitlan**, on a small island in the marshy waters of Lake Texcoco. Causeways linked the city to the shore. Farmers built **chinampas**, garden plots made of mud piled up in the shallow lake. Spanish soldiers and their Indigenous allies conquered Tenochtitlan in 1521. More than a million people in Mexico still speak Nahuatl, the Mexica language.

The **Inca** built an empire in the Andes Mountains of South America, with its capital at Cusco. From about 1438, the empire grew quickly. Inca officials kept records on **khipu**, sets of knotted, colored cords. The Inca also linked older roads with new ones, forming a network thousands of miles long. Spanish forces began conquering the empire in 1532. Today, millions of people in the Andes speak Quechua, the main language of the Inca Empire.

Three Civilizations of the Americas Compared

Civilization	Where and when (about)	Government and achievements
Maya	Rainforests and highlands in parts of today's Mexico and Central America. Classic period about 250 to 900 CE.	Many rival city-states, each led by its own rulers. Scribes carved hieroglyphs on stone monuments.
Aztec (Mexica)	Valley of Mexico. Tenochtitlan founded about 1325 on a lake island.	An empire run by an alliance of three cities, formed about 1428. Farmers built chinampas in the lake.
Inca	Andes Mountains of western South America. Rapid growth from about 1438.	One empire ruled from Cusco by an emperor. Officials kept records on khipu, and roads crossed the mountains.

1. Using the dates in the table, which list puts the civilizations in order from the earliest date shown to the latest?

A. Aztec, Maya, Inca
B. Aztec, Inca, Maya
C. Inca, Aztec, Maya
D. Maya, Aztec, Inca

2. Match each term from the passage about the Americas to its meaning.

Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ hieroglyphs
2. _____ Mexica
3. _____ Tenochtitlan
4. _____ chinampas
5. _____ khipu
6. _____ Quechua

Choices for question 2

A. a ship that sailed from Spain
B. a language that millions of people in the Andes speak today
C. garden plots made of mud piled up in a shallow lake
D. signs for words and sounds carved on stone monuments
E. sets of knotted, colored cords used to keep records
F. a capital city founded on a small island in a lake
G. a stone pyramid with a temple on top
H. the name the Aztec used for themselves

3. According to the table, how did the governments of the three civilizations differ?

A. The Maya had many rival city-states, while the Aztec and Inca built empires.
B. The Inca had many city-states, while the Maya and Aztec had empires.
C. The Aztec had no rulers, while the Maya and Inca had emperors.
D. All three were made up of many small, rival city-states.

4. What does the passage say about Maya people today?

A. No one knows where the Maya once lived.
B. The Maya disappeared after their Classic period.
C. Millions of Maya people still live in the region.
D. The Maya all moved to South America.

5. Using the table, which civilization lived the farthest south?

A. the Aztec
B. the Maya
C. All three lived in the same region.
D. the Inca

6. Which two achievements belong to the Inca, according to the passage and the table? Select 2.

☐ A. records kept on knotted, colored cords

☐ B. garden plots built up in Lake Texcoco

☐ C. hieroglyph writing carved on stone monuments

☐ D. roads joined into a network across the Andes

7. Who conquered Tenochtitlan in 1521, according to the passage?

A. Maya warriors from Tikal

B. Spanish soldiers with no help from anyone

C. the Inca army from Cusco

D. Spanish soldiers and their Indigenous allies

8. The passage says the Inca "linked older roads with new ones." What does this tell you about the Inca road network?

A. Some of its roads were older, and the Inca joined them to new ones.

B. The Inca built every one of its roads from nothing, all by themselves.

C. The Maya built the whole network long before the Inca Empire began.

D. All of its roads were built by the Spanish after they arrived in 1532.

9. The table says the Inca empire grew quickly from about 1438. The passage says Spanish forces began conquering it in 1532. About how long did the empire grow before the Spanish came?

A. about 100 years

B. about 1,000 years

C. about 10 years

D. about 300 years

10. Which fact can you find in the table but not in the passage?

A. The Maya Classic period began about 250 CE.

B. The Aztec alliance of three cities formed about 1428.

C. Tenochtitlan was founded about 1325.

D. The Inca empire grew quickly from about 1438.