

Brian Tomasik  
October 6, 2001

### Cultural Exploration Assignment: Part I

The Incas Remembered is an informative but entertaining video that shows both the past Inca civilization and the present-day culture. I chose this activity because I had always thought the Incas were interesting and there weren't any other activities about the subject. We will be studying the Incas this year in Global History and Geography I. The video allowed me to see many buildings and artifacts without actually visiting the place. I was able to borrow it from the Guilderland Public Library, which is on 2228 Western Avenue in Guilderland, NY.

The Incas, who lived in present-day Peru, Ecuador, Chile, and Bolivia from about 1200 to 1535 AD, were able to accomplish a great number of achievements, including digging large terraces for farming, using a massive system of roads on which runners relayed information from one part of the empire to the other, keeping track of numbers using knotted ropes, developing a very precise calendar, performing brain surgery with simple tools of silver and copper, and being able to fit thousands of colossal stones into each other so well that a blade of grass cannot be stuck between them. The Incas used a cooperative system of farming, where the crops were divided and shared. In addition to terraces, the Incas had an impressive irrigation system. They grew several crops including corn, beans, squash, and tomatoes. They also grew potatoes, which they were able to freeze-dry for preservation. About seventy percent of the food crops that exist today came from that area.

Despite the fact that the Incas had no wheel, they were somehow still able to lift rocks, many weighing several thousands of tons, up hills and on top of each other. They were able to fit the rocks closely together without the use of iron or steel tools. The most famous of the large cities constructed with large boulders is Machu Picchu.

Several roles existed in the Inca civilization, the simplest being a farmer. There were some positions of royalty, which were passed on to their children. Gold, which was plentiful and considered as divine, was often used by royalty, usually for decoration.

Most of the ceremonies, rituals, feasts, and fasts of the Incas took place because of religion. They had several gods, including a god of the sun, moon, stars, earth, and sea and a main god called Viracocha. Human sacrifices did take place, but not nearly as often as in the Mayan culture. The Incas had a game similar to that of the Mayans and Aztecs (which was like basketball), but this, too, was for religious purposes.

The video also details what brought about the end of the Incan civilization. Spanish conquistador, Francisco Pizarro, and his men arrived in South America in 1532. The Incan leader, Atahualpa, didn't fear Pizarro at first, but Pizarro soon captured him. He demanded an enormous amount of gold in return for freeing the Incan leader. After the gold was given to him, Pizarro murdered Atahualpa. Pizarro knew that if the leader were killed, the rest of the civilization would be easier to conquer. The Incas were also fighting a civil war at the time, and their energy was not fully focused on defending themselves. In addition the guns, metal swords, and horses of the conquistadors enabled them to quickly overpower and kill many Incas.

In the present-day, many Incan descendents still exist and live around the Andes Mountains. However, many of them are poor farmers and are looked down upon. The Spanish are the dominant culture in the area, and Spanish is the language primarily spoken. In addition, the area has been affected by the culture of America and many European countries.

The video, in addition to verbally conveying facts, shows the places, artifacts, and buildings, allowing the viewer to get a more complete sense of the civilization, both ancient and contemporary. I also interviewed Mrs. Mackey about the Incas, asking questions about their calendar, distribution of power, terraces, their language, crops, and present-day Incas, among other things. This documentary is a great learning opportunity and should be shown to all students studying global history. The photography of the structures and artifacts were some of the best parts of the video. It could have, however, presented more information while the pictures were being shown. It would be very cheap and easy to show, for all the school would need would be the video. From this experience, I may decide to read a book or watch another video about the Incas. The video can make people better world citizens by teaching them to respect other cultures and to realize the devastating effects that imperialism can have on other cultures.