

Interview with the Mayas, Aztecs, and Incas

Introduction

This play was written for 6th grade students to perform after studying about the Inca, Aztec and Mayan empires and their conquest by the Spanish. The number of parts can be combined if needed. A powerpoint presentation was used as a background on a big screen instead of creating large backdrops. Students created costumes by sewing canvas together and then painting it with designs typical to each Indian group. The inside bladder of an old volleyball (they are black) was used to represent the rubber ball used in the Indian games.

Interview with the Mayas, Aztecs, and Incas

Characters

Newscaster 1	Aztec 1 - Atl
Newscaster 2	Aztec 2 – Chimalma
Producer	Aztec 3 – Centehua
Studio Cameraman	Aztec 4 – Gardener 1
Correspondent 1	Aztec 5 – Warrior
Correspondent 2	Aztec 6 – Warrior
Correspondent 3	Aztec 7 – Neighboring Indian
Field Cameraman 1	Inca 1 - Ayar
Field Cameraman 2	Inca 2 - Supay
Field Cameraman 3	Hernan Cortez
Mayan 1 – Kan Chitamm	Dona Marina
Mayan 2 – Lady K’awil	Francisco Pizzaro

Setting

Stage Left: A table with two chairs is set up at an angle facing the audience. A large sign above the table reads, “New Station 6.” A black tablecloth covers the front and sides of the table. A cameraman stands far stage left with a stationary video camera with a large “6” on the sides. Two newscasters sit at the table with papers in front of them (“notes”), as well as two coffee mugs.

Upstage Center: A large screen remains throughout, displaying photos from a Power Point to aid in the illusion of offsite reporting.

Stage Right: A large cardboard cutout of a Mayan Temple

Scene I

*News Music Intro – as music fades, **Producer**, wearing a headset holding a clipboard, cues **Newscasters** to start, and **Studio Cameraman** focuses in on News Desk.*

Producer – *(counting down on fingers with hand in the air) 5, 4, 3 (does the last 2 counts silently, only on hands, and after 1 points to the newscasters).*

Newscaster 1 – This is channel six with a special in-depth look at three Mesoamerican civilizations of the pre-Columbian Americas.

Newscaster 2 – That is right. We will be speaking with correspondents in the field with

the Mayan, Aztec and Incan people. We go live to (correspondent 1 name) in Tikal.

Stage Left: Freezes

Scene II

Center Stage: Photo of Tikal

Stage Right: Correspondent 1 is interviewing Kan Chitamm and Lady K'awil, Field cameraman 1 is filming them far stage right

Correspondent 1 – Thank you (Newscaster 2 name). I am here with Kan Chitamm and Lady K'awil in the Mayan city of Tikal. Kan, I have heard that your people are very advanced in the sciences. Can you tell me more about that?

Center Stage: Photo of Mayan Hieroglyphics and Calendar

Kan Chitamm – Yes, we are a very intelligent people. We have a developed written language, one of the oldest in the world. It is logosyllabic and has over a thousand characters, or glyphs. We did not invent the calendar, but we improved it. Our calendar is based on the stars and tracking the moon to show us the seasons.

Correspondent 1 – We have heard great things about your calendar and being able to predict natural solar and lunar eclipses. Is it true that the earth will end in 2012?

Kan Chitamm – *laugh* – Maybe? We will have to wait and see.

Correspondent 1 – That doesn't sound very encouraging. Lady K'awil, what can you tell us about the religion of the Mayan people?

Center Stage: Three photos representing religion

Lady K'awil – Well, we believe in many different gods, but there are three major areas. The caves and tunnels represent the first and will lead you to the underworld, similar to the Christian's Hell. The sun, moon and stars represent the second, much like the Christian's Heaven. And the earth represents the third. We focus much of our attention on pleasing the underworld gods with human sacrifices so that the gods of the sky will bless our crops.

Correspondent 1 - The buildings behind us are beautiful. Can you tell us more about them?

Center Stage: Photo of Mayan buildings

Kan Chitamm – They are made out of limestone taken from our local quarry. They are

temples or palaces; our king lives in one of them. We have a base five mathematical system that was used to measure our materials before building.

Correspondent 1 – They certainly are beautiful. Thank you so much for sharing with us. This is (correspondent 1 name) reporting live from Tikal. Back to you (Newscaster 1 name) in the studio.

Scene III

(Newscaster 1 and 2 are sitting at table, Producer motions they are on)

Newscaster 1 – We have just received breaking news that the nomad group of Aztecs finally found a location to build a city. We go live to (Correspondent 2 name) in the Valley of Mexico for this intriguing story.

Stage Left: Freezes

Scene IV

Center Stage: photo of Tenochitlan

Stage Right: Floating Garden with Aztec 4 gardening while Correspondent 2 is interviewing Atl and Chimalma, Field cameraman 2 is filming from the far right side

Correspondent 2 – Thank you (Newscaster 1 name). I am here with Atl and Chimalma on the shore of Lake Texcoco. Atl, can you tell me what happened to cause your people to stop wandering around and build a city?

Atl – It is amazing! We have been wandering around for over 200 years waiting for the gods to reveal where they wanted us to live. The gods told us to look for an eagle sitting on a cactus eating a snake and that would be our promise land.

Center Stage: Photo of eagle on cactus eating snake in the lake

Chimalma – It's true. We saw the eagle ourselves and were so excited to have found the place prepared for us by the gods! The only problem is that it is in the middle of a lake, so there isn't much room.

Atl- But we thought ahead and created walkways from island to island and to the mainland so we could get from place to place easily on foot, or we can travel by canoe. We also have chinampas.

Correspondent 2 - I am sorry. Did you say chinampas? What are those?

Center Stage: Photo of chinampas

Chimalma – If you come over here, we can show you.

(Correspondent 2, Field Cameraman 2, Chimalma and Atl walk over to the chinampa where Aztec 4 is gardening)

Chimalma – We don't have much land as you can see, so we developed floating gardens, which are really piled mud. We start with a reed mat (*holds up reed mat*) and put a layer of topsoil down and then plant our seeds. Once the seeds sprout, we replant them in the chinampas. We can get up to seven crops a year this way.

Atl – We love our gardens, but we also love our fish. That is the benefit of living on a lake.

(Aztec 5, 6 and 7 go walking by carrying a large ball and firewood)

Correspondent 2 – Wait, excuse me... *(She calls out to those walking past. The three stop and turn back towards the camera.)*

Aztec 5 – Yes?

Correspondent 2 – I couldn't help but notice you have a ball. Are you going to play a game?

Aztec 5 – Sort of. We are going to choose boundaries. Instead of going to war, we will be playing a game at the ball court.

Center Stage: photo of ball court

Correspondent 2 – What happens to the losers?

Aztec 6 – They will either be sacrificed or become slaves.

Correspondent 2 – Wow, good luck! One last question – the firewood, what is that for?

Aztec 7 – It is my tribute, sort of like taxes.

(Aztec 5, 6, 7 continue on, correspondent turning back to Chimalma and Atl)

Correspondent 2 – What can you tell me about the educational system here? Those two looked like they had been training to be athletes?

Atl – We have one of the earliest educational systems around. All children are required to go to school. We have two schools for the boys, one that focuses on learning how to be farmers, and the other where they study sciences and writing to become the doctors and architects. The girls go to school too – to learn about religion.

Correspondent 2 – I must say we have learned a lot today about the largest and fastest growing civilization in Mesoamerica. This is (correspondent 2 name) reporting live from the city of Tenochtitlan. Back to you in the studio.

Scene V

Stage left: Producer motions they are live

Newscaster 2 – Our story continues with the people of Peru. The Incas, or Children of the Sun, have created a city above the clouds. We go to (correspondent 3 name) for the rest of the story.

Stage left: freezes

Scene VI

Center Stage: Photos of Machu Picchu

Correspondent 3 – Thank you. We are freezing up here in the Andes Mountains, just north of Cuzco. The people living here have adapted to the weather and thin air. What can you share with us about your culture?

Ayar – We are children of the sun, and worship the sun god. Because of living on the side of a mountain, we have developed a system of farming the land. Terraces! We grow many of the foods you find in the market today, squash, chili peppers, tomatoes, and corn.

Supay – Because our ruler is holy we don't question what they tell us to do – everything we do is done only once we are told to do so. We have beautiful gold- and jewel-filled artwork that is made for our king. He even has clothes that are made special for him that he only wears once and then they are burnt.

Center Stage: Photo of Incan artwork

Correspondent 3 – Does everyone live up here in the mountains?

Ayar – No, some of our people live in the desert or by the sea. Those who live in the desert spend time designing large artwork that can only be seen from above. We could tell you why but it's a secret.

Center Stage: Photo of desert artwork

Supay – Be nice Ayar. We have a great system of communication. Runners will run a relay with messages throughout our empire; sometimes they will even bring fresh fish from the ocean to our king. We are an advanced culture with a great understanding of science; we can even perform brain surgery.

Correspondent 3 – Well, thank you for helping us get a better understanding of your culture, but I think I am a bit too cold to stay here much longer! Back to you in the studio.

Scene VII

*Stage Right: Two additional chairs have been added to the side of the news table. Sitting in them are Cortez and Dona – **Producer** motions they are on...*

Newscaster 1 - Thank you (correspondent 3 name). You look cold, but we enjoyed the inside look at the Incan Empire. We are joined in the studio now by Hernan Cortez and Dona Marina. We understand you have some devastating news about the Aztecs?

Hernan Cortez – I don't know if you would call it devastating – I call it a victory! A VICTORY for Spain, VIVA ESPANIA! I was originally supposed to go to Cuba and become a farmer. Blah, who wants to be a farmer?! I am too handsome to be a farmer – I am an explorer and CONQUISTADOR! (*he stands up on his chair and strikes a pose*)

Newscaster 1 – Uh, um... thank you Sr. Cortez, but could you please sit back down?

Hernan Cortez – Oh, yes sorry, I just get so excited. (*he sits down after winking at one of the ladies in the audience*)

Newscaster 1 – Thank you. Um where were we? Yes, the conquering of the Aztecs. Dona Marina, can you tell us how you fit into the story?

Dona Marina – Well, I was an Aztec princess, and other Indian tribes in the area captured me more than once, so I learned to speak many different languages including Spanish. The Aztecs were not very nice neighbors – they would make you pay tribute or capture you as slaves or even sacrifice you to the gods. Many of the other Indians in the area didn't like them, so when Cortez came along, they agreed to join him in conquering the Aztecs.

Hernan Cortez – Yes, it was easier than I thought! The Aztec ruler Montezuma thought I was a god sent away, who had returned over the sea, and he invited me into the capital city of Tenochtitlan to meet with his high ranking government officials. He gave me gifts of gold. They were unarmed, so I killed them all and burned part of the city. I kept Montezuma alive, and the other Indian groups, with the assistance of Dona Marina, helped to capture and destroy the Aztec empire once and for all by surrounding it and cutting off all supplies in or out!

Newscaster 1 – Wow, I don't really know what to say to that? But I am afraid our time is cut short as we have an interview with another explorer. Thank you for coming.

Hernan Cortez – My pleasure. (*shakes hands and leaves with Dona Marina stage left*)

Stage Left: Pizzaro enters and sits down next to the news desk

Newscaster 2 – We are joined by Francisco Pizzaro, another explorer from Spain. He originally asked to speak with the new Incan ruler in order to convert him to Christianity. Pizzaro, in your own words can you tell us what happened next?

Francisco Pizzaro – I met with Atahualpa, the Incan ruler, and handed him a Bible. He threw it on the floor, so I knew that must mean war! Later I figured out he just didn't know what a book was, let alone the Bible, but that isn't important. My men and I attacked on horse with our guns and cannon; they were no match for us! I captured Atahualpa.

Newscaster 2 – Why didn't you just kill him with the others?

Francisco Pizzaro – I am not sure, but I kept him alive for six months. He noticed that I like gold and jewels, so he offered to fill the room I was keeping him in with gold in exchange for his freedom. I agreed, and he filled the room so full of gold I couldn't believe it; I had heard the Americas were rich with treasure, but this was amazing. Of course it wouldn't make sense for me to release Atahualpa – he might attack me and take back his gold, so I had to kill him in the end.

Newscaster 2 – That is a sad story for the Inca, and we just heard about the demise of the Aztec. Has anyone heard from the Mayan? Are they still alive?

Producer – *(holding headset as if listening)* Yes, in fact we have one right now we can interview... *(to Pizzaro)* I am sorry, sir, I am going to have to ask you to leave.

(Pizzaro exits stage left and Kan Chittam enters and sits down)

Newscaster 2 – Kan Chittam, yes, how nice to meet you in person. What can you tell us about the Mayan people today?

Kan Chittam – We no longer live in our cities, but we are still very much alive and well, living nearby in modern Southern Mexico, and Northern Central America.

Newscaster 2 – So the Spanish didn't wipe out your cities, conquer your people or steal your riches?

Kan Chittam – No.

Newscaster 2 – And the ending date of December 23, 2012 of your calendar... will that be the end of your people? Will it be the end of all people?

Kan – *(shrugs his shoulders)* Guess we will just have to wait and see.

Newscaster 2 – Well, that concludes our broadcast today, thank you for tuning in to

Channel 6 News. We hope that you learned something today about our past and present and got you curious about the future.

*(news music plays while the **Newscasters** quietly “talk” to **Kan Chittam** and fiddle with their notes. The **Producer** checks the clipboard and “talks” over the headset)*

THE END