



# The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor

7

## ✓ Lesson Objectives

### Core Content Objectives

Students will:

- ✓ Identify the area in which the Aztec lived
- ✓ Explain that the Aztec had leaders (emperors)
- ✓ Identify by name the emperor of the Aztec, Moctezuma
- ✓ Identify the Aztec capital as Tenochtitlan

### Language Arts Objectives

The following language arts objectives are addressed in this lesson. Objectives aligning with the Common Core State Standards are noted with the corresponding standard in parentheses. Refer to the Alignment Chart for additional standards that are addressed in all lessons in this domain.

Students will:

- ✓ Draw pictures, dictate, or write simple sentences to represent three details or information from “The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor” (RI.1.2, RI.1.3)
- ✓ Describe an illustration of Moctezuma (RI.1.6)
- ✓ Compare and contrast orally, and in writing, cultural elements of the Maya and the Aztec (RI.1.9)
- ✓ Write and illustrate three details from “The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor” and discuss with one or more peers (W.1.2, W.1.5)
- ✓ With assistance, categorize and organize information about aspects of the Aztec culture into a civilizations chart (W.1.8)

- ✓ With assistance, create and interpret a timeline that begins with a time approximately three thousand years ago, ends with “today,” includes a marker for the Maya between 1000 BCE and 1542 CE, and indicates that Moctezuma lived approximately five hundred years ago (W.1.8)
- ✓ Clarify information about “The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor” by asking questions that begin with *why* (SL.1.1c)
- ✓ Clarify directions by asking classmates about the directions for an activity in which they are drawing details from “The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor” (SL.1.3)

### Core Vocabulary

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**emperor, n.** The ruler of an empire

*Example:* Her favorite tale was the one about the emperor and his new clothes.

*Variation(s):* emperors

**empire, n.** The people and land conquered and ruled by one king or emperor, often against their will

*Example:* It took a long time to travel from one end of the empire to the other.

*Variation(s):* empires

**palace, n.** A very large house where a king or queen lives and rules his or her kingdom

*Example:* The king and queen lived in a palace on a hill outside of town.

*Variation(s):* palaces

**retreat, v.** To escape or turn around and run away


*Example:* The boys got on their bikes to retreat from the smelly skunks.

*Variation(s):* retreats, retreated, retreating

**wealth, n.** Valuable possessions or resources

*Example:* Precious stones made up most of the king’s wealth.

*Variation(s):* none

<b><i>At a Glance</i></b>	<b>Exercise</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
<b><i>Introducing the Read-Aloud</i></b>	<b>Where Are We?</b>	world map or globe	10
	<b>What Have We Already Learned?</b>		
	<b>Essential Background Information or Terms</b>		
	<b>Purpose for Listening</b>		
<b><i>Presenting the Read-Aloud</i></b>	<b>The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor</b>		15
<b><i>Discussing the Read-Aloud</i></b>	<b>Comprehension Questions</b>		10
	<b>Word Work: Emperor</b>		5
 <b>Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day</b>			
<b><i>Extensions</i></b>	<b>Civilizations Chart</b>	Image Card 13	20
	<b>Timeline</b>	Image Card 14	
	<b>Drawing the Read-Aloud</b>	drawing paper, drawing tools	



# The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor

7A

## Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

### Where Are We?

On a world map or globe, have one student locate the area where the Maya lived. Then, have another student locate the area where the Aztec lived. If students have trouble locating the regions, remind them that the Maya lived in Mexico and Central America and that the Aztec lived in central Mexico, north of the Maya.

### What Have We Already Learned?

Ask students if they remember what they learned in the last read-aloud about how the Aztec farmed. Prompt students to discuss farming with the *chinampas* (floating gardens). Remind them that the gardens did not actually float but were held stationary because of the roots that formed over time.



### Essential Background Information or Terms

#### ◀ Show image 7A-1: Moctezuma and his entourage

Explain to students that this read-aloud is about *Moctezuma* (mok-te-zoo-ma) the Second, the emperor of the Aztec empire. Ask students if they know what an emperor is. If not, explain that an emperor is the ruler of an empire, like a king. This means that, like a king, he ruled people. Ask students if we have an emperor today who rules us. Guide discussion to help students understand that we do have people in power—for example presidents, senators, governors, and mayors—who help rule us, even though we do not have an emperor. An emperor usually rules over people and their land. An empire is the people and the land that has been conquered and ruled by one king or emperor, often against their will.

## Purpose for Listening

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Ask students if they remember what type of leader the Maya had. What were the names of the two kings that they learned about? (King Pakal and his son, King Chan Bahlam) If students have trouble, refer back to the Civilizations Chart and review the Mayan leaders.

Explain to students that today they will hear a made-up story about a real emperor, Moctezuma, who ruled the Aztec empire a long time ago. Tell students to listen carefully to find out what kind of leader the Aztec had and how it was the same or different from the leaders the Maya had.



## The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor

### ◀ Show image 7A-1: Moctezuma and his entourage<sup>1</sup>

- 1 [Point to Moctezuma in the picture.] So, Moctezuma was the emperor of a large empire.
- 2 [Ask students if they have ever heard of a palace before. Elicit their ideas about palaces, grand homes for kings, queens, and emperors.]

Moctezuma (mok-te-zoo-ma) the Second, **emperor** of the Aztec people, commander of the fierce Aztec army, highest of high priests, was moving through his immense **palace** in the city of Tenochtitlan (te-nawch-tee-TLAHN), the capital of the Aztec **empire**.<sup>2</sup> Before him walked one of the four most important Aztec nobles who served the emperor. Dressed in brightly colored, cotton clothing, the nobleman's head was encircled by magnificent tropical bird feathers that stuck out of a headdress made of gold.

This fancily dressed nobleman led the way through the halls of the palace toward the throne room, passing one of the enormous dining halls and turning down a corridor running between two large libraries. Far behind in the gigantic palace lay hundreds of bedrooms, including the great emperor's, where the bedsheets would be slept upon just once and then thrown away.

Behind him, the nobleman heard the steady slapping of the emperor's golden sandals upon the floor, and the swishing of leaves as nobles fanned the emperor's body to keep him cool as he walked.



### ◀ Show image 7A-2: Throne room

- 3 This means that if anyone looked at Moctezuma's face or wore shoes while Moctezuma was around, they would be sentenced to death. Do you think that seems like a reasonable punishment?

They entered the throne room. It was more than half full already with men and women looking down silently, for they knew that the emperor was approaching and no one was allowed to look at the emperor's face. Those who were wearing shoes had already slipped out of them, for they knew they must take them off in Emperor Moctezuma's presence. To break any of these rules would have seemed unthinkable to the Aztec, for everyone knew it would mean death to the lawbreaker.<sup>3</sup>



← **Show image 7A-3: Moctezuma sitting on a jeweled throne**

The feathered nobleman stopped as he approached the throne, standing aside and turning his eyes downward as Moctezuma walked forward and sat down upon his jeweled throne. Moctezuma was a man whose **wealth** could not even be measured.<sup>4</sup> In his palace were entire rooms filled with gold and silver, and everything from fabulous, hand-carved jewelry to masks.

4 This means that Moctezuma was so rich that it was impossible to figure out exactly how rich he was.

Now another of the Emperor's noblemen spoke. "O, Speaker," he began. This was the Emperor's most important title, for it meant that it was he who was thought to speak to the gods in order to keep them on the side of the Aztec.<sup>5</sup>

5 Remember, the Aztec believed in many gods that controlled different things.

"Today there are lords here<sup>6</sup> from the eastern part of your empire. They come to pay their respects to you, but also to bring more details of the strangers who come from the east."

6 Lords are owners of land or other property.



← **Show image 7A-4: Report of strangers**

The nobleman brought the lords forward. The emperor said, "We have reports of strangers riding upon huge deer. What have you seen with your own eyes, and what have you heard?"

Now the oldest of the visiting lords, forcing himself not to look upward upon Moctezuma's face, told the emperor, "I too have seen these men. But now their leader has done something we do not understand. He has ordered his people to burn the wooden ships at sea. They are now camped on the shore with their deer."<sup>7</sup>

7 Can you guess what the huge deer were that the strangers were riding? The Aztecs had never seen horses.

Moctezuma was giving his full attention to the man's words. Then he turned to the Snake Woman who stood beside his throne. Oddly, the Snake Woman, the second most important person in the government, was not a woman at all, but a man.



← **Show image 7A-5: Moctezuma and Snake Woman**

The title of Snake Woman was given to a man in honor of one of the Aztec goddesses whose importance was second only to the gods of the sun and the rain. The Snake Woman helped the emperor run the nation.

“Does the burning of the wooden ships mean that they intend to never leave our lands?” the emperor asked the Snake Woman.

The Snake Woman replied, “I do not know, O, Emperor, but it seems to show that the strangers feel safe enough here to cut off their own form of **retreat**.”<sup>8</sup>

The Snake Woman nodded to the nobleman, who continued, “There is other news. These strangers have made friends with the Totonacs (TOH-teh-NAHKS), the people of Cempoala (SEHM-poh-AH-lah). And together with them, they are starting in this direction.”

At this, a worried murmur ran through all those in the throne room, for the Totonacs, the people of Cempoala, were enemies of the Aztec.<sup>9</sup>

8 To retreat from something means to move away from it or leave. Since the visitors are burning their ships, they must be planning to stay, and not retreat, or leave.

9 Why would the strangers make friends with the Aztec’s enemies? Were they planning to attack the Aztec?



◀ **Show image 7A-6: Moctezuma’s feast**

The lords continued their report, followed by reports on other matters by other servants of Moctezuma. Afterward, the nobleman with the magnificent feathers once again led the emperor through the halls, this time to his main dining hall.<sup>10</sup> There, Moctezuma and hundreds of his nobles sat down to a feast, eating off beautiful plates that were given away after just one use.

10 A dining hall is a place where people eat meals. [You may want to reference the school cafeteria.]



◀ **Show image 7A-7: Moctezuma meeting with his counselors**

Later, Moctezuma and his chief advisors met together and the emperor said, “Send gold and silver to the leaders of these strangers. Let the nobles who bring these gifts tell the strangers that they are on Aztec land, ruled by Emperor Moctezuma, who sends these small tokens of his power and wealth.”<sup>11</sup> They will know from these gifts the great wealth and power we wield here, and perhaps they will turn and leave our empire.”<sup>12</sup>

11 The emperor wants to show off his riches, or his wealth, to assert, or prove, his power.

12 Who do you think these strangers are?



### Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

1. *Literal* Who was the emperor of the Aztec in the story? (Moctezuma)
2. *Literal* Was the capital of the Aztec empire Tenochtitlan or Baakal? (Tenochtitlan; Baakal was a Mayan city)
3. *Literal* Was the Snake Woman really a woman? (no, a man) Who was Snake Woman named after? (an Aztec goddess)
4. *Inferential* Why does Moctezuma want to send the strangers gifts? (to show his power and wealth in hopes that they will leave)
5. *Evaluative* Do you think the strangers will leave once they receive the gifts from Moctezuma? Why or why not? (Answers may vary.)

[Please continue to model the *Question? Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

6. *Evaluative Why? Pair Share:* Answering questions after a read-aloud is one way to see how much everyone has learned. Think of a question you can ask your neighbor about the read-aloud that starts with the word *why*. For example, you could ask, “Why didn’t people look at Moctezuma?” Turn to your neighbor and ask your *why* question. Listen to your neighbor’s response. Then your neighbor will ask a new *why* question, and you will get a chance to respond. I will call on several of you to share your questions with the class.
7. After hearing today’s read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these questions.]

## Word Work: Emperor

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “Moctezuma the Second was the *emperor* of the Aztec people.”
2. Say the word *emperor* with me.
3. An emperor is a ruler, kind of like a king. A female emperor is called an empress.
4. The emperor ruled his empire very strictly.
5. Moctezuma was the emperor of the Aztec, so people were not allowed to look at him, and every time he ate, he used new plates. What would it be like if you were an emperor or empress? Try to use the word *emperor* or *empress* when you talk about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase students’ responses: “If I were an emperor (empress), I would . . . ”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about?

Use a *Drawing Activity* for follow-up. Directions: Pretend you are an emperor/empress, and draw a picture of your empire. What would you call your empire? Write or dictate one sentence to explain your drawing. Be sure to use the word(s) *emperor* (or *empress*) and, if you can, *empire* when you tell about it.



**Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day**



# The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor

7<sub>B</sub>

## Extensions

20 minutes

### Civilizations Chart

Show students Image Card 13 (Moctezuma). Explain to students that this is a picture of Moctezuma, the emperor of the Aztec, who they heard about in today's read-aloud. Talk about the Image Card, and have students share what they learned from the read-aloud about Moctezuma. Ask students how this is similar to the Maya. (They both had rulers. Both Pakal and Moctezuma were very rich.) Ask students how this is different from the Maya. (Pakal was a king, and Moctezuma was an emperor.) Tell students that you are going to place the Image Card on the "Civilizations" chart to help them remember that the Aztec had leaders called emperors.

### Timeline

Show students the timeline. Remind students that this timeline represents all that has passed, from the time of the Mayan Civilization, until today. Show students Image Card 14 (Moctezuma and His Entourage). Estimate about five hundred years prior to the "today" marker on the timeline, and place Image Card 14 there. Explain to students that the read-aloud they heard today took place a long time ago, but a number of years after King Pakal and the stories about the Maya they heard.

**Note:** The Maya was the earliest civilization and spanned more than 2000 years, from 1000 BCE to 1542 CE. Both the Aztec and the Inca were later civilizations that only overlapped briefly with the Maya and spanned a little over two hundred years, from 1300 CE to 1533 CE.

## Drawing the Read-Aloud

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Tell students to think about the read-aloud they listened to earlier in the day: “The Aztec: In the Palace of an Emperor.” Ask students to draw three details that they remember about the read-aloud, allowing no more than six to eight minutes for the drawing. Explain that the drawing does not have to recreate a “scene” from the read-aloud or represent a coherent, integrated drawing of the read-aloud; students may draw any three “things” they remember about the read-aloud. As students draw, circulate around the classroom, and help any group or student who has trouble remembering items from the read-aloud.

Say, “Asking questions is one way to make sure that everyone knows what to do. Think of a question you can ask your neighbor about the directions I have just given you. For example, you could ask, “What should we do first?” Turn to your neighbor and ask your own question now. I will call on several of you to share your questions with the class.”

Give students the opportunity to share their drawings with a partner or the class. As students share, expand their responses using richer and more complex language, including, if possible, any read-aloud vocabulary.