



Teacher's Guide

Mayans: Deception by Temple Rituals **Cultural Legacies of Ancient Civilizations Series**

Grade Levels:

7 - 12

Subject Areas:

Social Studies

World History

World Geography and Cultures

Synopsis:

Reviews Mayan accomplishments in mathematics and astronomy, then focuses on the Mayans' sacrificial religious practices such as the life or death ball games. Develops the theme of blood sacrifice to the gods as a means of social control rather than religious fervor, since the ritual shedding of the king's blood was carried out in secret. Details the ceremonial practices in which the king's tongue was pierced to provide a blood sacrifice to the gods. Observes that as these ritual practices died out, so did the Mayan Empire.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

- Explain how a culture so advanced in mathematics and astronomy could also practice human sacrifice.
- Describe the Mayan ball court and the outcome of the ball game.
- Describe the bloodletting of the king as a ritual that maintained his control over his people.
- Describe the significance of images of Mayan kings with long, protruding tongues.
- Explain why religious ceremonies that maintain political power are often held in secret.

Vocabulary:

sophisticated, jeopardized, awe-inspiring, flamboyant, overture, frenzied, mutilation, obsidian, bloodletting, sprawling, subterfuge, oblivion

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

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What was the geographical extent of ancient Mayan civilization? What areas of the world contain Mayan artifacts? Where do Mayas live today?

What were the accomplishments of the ancient Mayas? In what fields of endeavor were they most renowned?

What do architectural ruins and stone sculptures suggest about Mayan society?

Why did Mayan society flourish, and then die?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

What was the purpose of the Mayan ball game? What did it indicate about the beliefs of the ancient Mayas?

How was the worship of the corn plant and harvest cycles related to religious beliefs expressed by the Mayan ball game?

What is the significance of images of Mayan kings with long, protruding tongues?

Why was the shedding of the king's blood performed in secret?

Further Activities:

Investigate the influence of Mayan ceremonies and religious beliefs on works of literature published in the 20th Century.

Investigate other ancient societies that practiced animal or human sacrifice. Try to determine if these sacrifices were performed for religious reasons only.

Investigate the authenticity of Mayan religious ceremonies depicted in Hollywood movies.

Further investigate how the worship of a corn god or goddess was fundamental to other ancient cultures.

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