

# Disaster!

## Montezuma meets Cortés

As the year 1519 began, the Aztecs were jittery. It was the end of the 52-year cycle. Would the god Quetzalcoatl return to destroy the empire? Strange things began to happen. A temple caught fire and burned to the ground. A ball of fire streaked across the sky. These events seemed signs of terrible times to come. The Aztecs' fears came true in a way that none of them could have imagined.



► **SPANISH EXPLORER** and conqueror Hernán Cortés arrived in Tenochtitlan in 1519, just as the 52-year cycle was ending. He wanted gold for himself and Spain. Determined to earn riches and the approval of the King of Spain, he planned to conquer the Aztec empire. According to legend, after he arrived in Mexico, Cortés burned his ships, so his men couldn't leave. They would have to stay and fight.

**CHECK IT OUT!**  
Who was Doña Marina, and how did she help Cortés? (answer on back cover)



▲ **IN 1519, AZTEC** legend says that a bird came

ashore with a mirror on its head. When the Aztec ruler Montezuma II looked into the mirror, he saw warriors approaching, rid-

ing on what he thought were deer.

▼ **AROUND THE SAME** time, Montezuma saw a comet in the sky, another sign of disaster.



¿Que pasa?



Cortés



▲ **THE AZTECS** were shocked by Cortés's huge ships. They had never seen anything like them before. The Aztec name for them was "mountain built on the water" and "house that moves across the sea."

Montezuma



Cool tights

► **THE AMAZED** Aztecs watched as Cortés and his 500 men rode into the city on what looked like huge dogs. They carried magical weapons that rained fire down from the sky. They spoke a strange language. Were they gods or demons?







▲ **CORTÉS OFFERED** Montezuma tribute. The Aztec leader feared Cortés might be Quetzalcoatl returning to destroy the city, but offered him a large gold disk, hoping to impress him. Cortés was impressed. He wanted all the gold he could get!

◀ **THIS FANCIFUL** drawing of Montezuma was done by a 19th-century European.

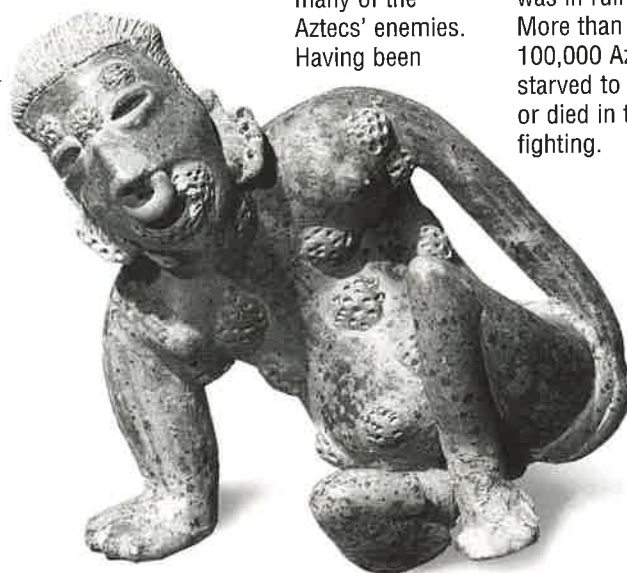
► **CORTÉS SOON** took Montezuma prisoner, and fighting broke out between the Aztecs and the Spanish soldiers. In the fighting, Montezuma was killed. The exact cause of his death is not known. He may have been killed by the Spanish, or he may have been killed by his own people, who had lost confidence in his leadership.



▲ **THE AZTECS WERE** no match for the Spanish with their cannons, guns, and metal armor. Cortés put together a large fighting force, which included many of the Aztecs' enemies. Having been

forced to pay tribute to Aztecs and watch their people being taken away for use as human sacrifices, many hated the Aztecs. By 1521, the city of Tenochtitlan was in ruins. More than 100,000 Aztecs starved to death or died in the fighting.

► **WITHIN TEN** years of Cortés's conquest, all of Mexico was under Spanish rule. Europeans brought smallpox and other new diseases that killed millions of the native peoples. The Aztecs scattered. Many were forced into slavery. The empire of the fifth sun was over. At right is a figurine with the disfiguring marks of smallpox.





# The Aztec Legacy

Though the Aztec empire ended, descendants of the Aztecs remain. Some traditions from the once mighty civilization still exist today.



▲ **MEXICO CITY, THE** capital of modern-day Mexico, was built on top of what was once Tenochtitlan. The National Palace

(above) was built on the foundation of Montezuma's palace. In 1978, an electric worker digging in the

streets discovered a large statue of an Aztec goddess. Shortly after, the base of the Great Temple was uncovered.



▲ **THE ISLAND GAR-**dens of Xochimilco (so-chee-MEAL-co) are a reminder of Mexico's Aztec past. The name comes from a word meaning "where the flowers grow" in the Aztec language, Nahuatl (NAH-wahtl). Seed beds for these island gardens are built

on reed mats that float in a lake. The area is a popular tourist spot, where people visit the gardens in colorful flat-bottomed boats. Today, it is also a World Heritage site, which means it is designated as a place that should be preserved and protected.



▲ **ANOTHER REMINDER** of Mexico's Aztec past waves proudly all over the city. It is Mexico's flag,



► **TODAY, PEOPLE IN** northern Veracruz (a state on the Gulf of Mexico) celebrate the *Volador*, a ceremony that dates back to Aztec times. Mexican men dressed like birds spiral on ropes to the ground from the top of a huge pole. Each man circles the pole 13 times, the number of days in an Aztec week. Above is an illustration of the *Volador* long ago.



with the eagle and the cactus in the center, the symbol of Tenochtitlan.

► **IN NOVEMBER,** when you sit down to a hearty meal on Thanksgiving Day, remember the Aztecs. Like

chocolate, the turkey was first brought back to Europe by the Spanish around 1519. The Aztecs called this bird a



*uexotl*, but when it made its way from Spain to dinner tables in Britain, the British renamed it *turkey* after another bird

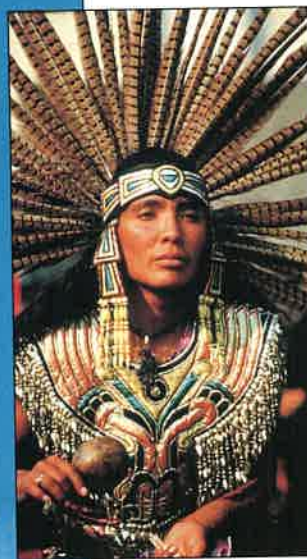
that came originally from the area around Turkey.

Xobble  
Xobble



▲ **NEXT TIME YOU** sip hot chocolate or eat a candy bar, thank the Aztecs. A favorite drink of the rich was *xocatl*, a bitter-tasting drink made from the cacao bean. This is where our word *chocolate* comes from. At the Aztec court in

1519, Montezuma served it to Cortés. Cortés took it back to Spain, where cooks sweetened it with cinnamon and vanilla and served it hot, just as we do today. Above, a Mexican family enjoys hot chocolate served in special cups.



◀ **DESCENDANTS OF** the Aztecs, called the Nahuatl (NAH-wah), number over 1.4 million. Some still speak Nahuatl, the Aztec language. Many Mexicans have an interest in their nation's Aztec past. Reminders can still be found in celebrations like this sun dance ceremony, in which the people ask the jaguar god for rain.



▲ **THE LARGEST** collection of Aztec artifacts is in Mexico City's National Museum of Anthropology,

with items from serving dishes to gold-plated statues. Above is a snarling, crouching stone jaguar.



## Sun Worshippers

The sun was an important image in Aztec art. Clay suns are still made in Mexico by the Nahua, the descendants of the Aztecs. Here is how you can make a clay sun to decorate your room.

### MATERIALS:

1 cup flour  
 ½ cup of salt  
 ½ cup of water  
 tempera paint (gold and other colors)  
 acrylic gloss varnish

### DIRECTIONS:



**1.** To make salt dough: Mix salt and flour. Stir in about half the water, then gradually add the rest of the water. On a piece of wax paper or a pastry board, knead the dough until it is smooth. Then roll or pat it out until it is about ¼ inch thick.



**2.** On a piece of scrap paper, draw a circle with a diameter of about 4 inches. Cut out the circle.



**3.** Put the paper circle on the dough and cut around it. Remove the paper and move the dough to a cookie sheet with a spatula. If it loses its shape around the edges, wet your fingers and reshape it.



**4.** With the extra dough, use a plastic knife to make eyes, nose, and mouth, and triangular shapes to put around the sun. Attach the shapes to the sun with wet fingers. Make a small hole in the top for hanging the sun.



**5.** Bake in a preheated oven at 325 degrees for about 1½ hours.



**6.** When the baked dough has cooled, paint with tempera paints mixed with a little acrylic gloss varnish (about ¾ paint to ¼ varnish).

## MORE READING ON AZTECS

### BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

☛ David Carrasco and Scott Sessions, *Daily Life of the Aztecs*, Greenwood, 1998.

☛ Imogen Dawson, *Clothes and Crafts in Aztec Times*, Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2000.

☛ Robert Hull, *The Aztecs*, Raintree-Steck-Vaughn, 1998.

☛ Eric Kimmel, *Montezuma and the Fall of the Aztecs*, Holiday House, 2000.

☛ Anthony Mason and Andrea Pinkney, editors, *Aztec Times*, Simon and Schuster, 1997.

### BOOKS FOR ADULTS

☛ Maurice Collis, *Cortés and Montezuma*, New Directions, 1999.

☛ Serge Gruzinski, *The Aztecs: Rise and Fall of an Empire*, Harry Abrams, 1992.

☛ Miguel Leon-Portilla, *Broken Spears*, Beacon Press, 1992.

☛ Michael Smith, editor, *The Aztecs*, Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

## Aztec Word Search

Find these 10 words that are reminders of the Aztecs: ocarina, chocolate, turkey, flag, eagle, jaguar, Valador, codex, glyph, gold. Words may be written forward, backward, vertically, horizontally, or diagonally.



Match each name with its description.

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. Tenochtitlan   | a. Feathered Serpent                     |
| _____ 2. Texcoco        | b. another term for "all-powerful ruler" |
| _____ 3. chinampas      | c. unlucky time for Aztecs               |
| _____ 4. Great Speaker  | d. Aztec capital city                    |
| _____ 5. Montezuma II   | e. Spanish conqueror of Aztecs           |
| _____ 6. Quetzalcoatl   | f. lake where Aztec capital was located  |
| _____ 7. "sun"          | g. descendants of Aztecs                 |
| _____ 8. "nothing days" | h. 52-year time period                   |
| _____ 9. Hernán Cortés  | i. last Aztec ruler                      |
| _____ 10. Nahua         | j. artificial islands                    |

The Aztecs made a drink out of chocolate. Can you make words out of it? Use the letters in the word *chocolate* to make as many four- and five-letter and longer words as you can. Some answers are on the back page. You can probably come up with more words.





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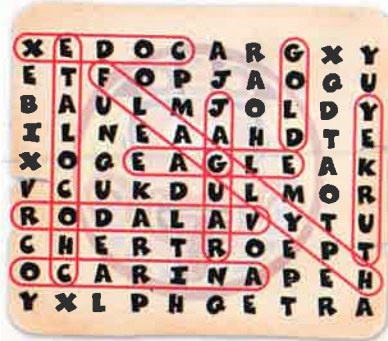
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**ANSWERS: PAGE 14:** Who was Doña Marina, and how did she help Cortés? *Doña Marina's birth name was Malintzin, but the Spanish later baptized her Doña Marina. She came from Vera Cruz, most likely of noble birth. Doña Marina served as a crucial link in Cortés's understanding of the Aztecs. She could speak both Maya and Nahuatl, and a man from the Yucatan could translate Maya into Spanish. With these two translators, Cortés was able to understand the Aztecs. Doña Marina is shown at Cortés's side in the picture at the top of page 15.*

**PAGE 19: AZTEC MATCH-UP:** 1. d; 2. f; 3. j; 4. b; 5. i; 6. a; 7. h; 8. c; 9. e; 10. g. **CHOCOLATE WORDS:** Four-letter words: late, teal, cola, hole, cool, tale, hoot, tale, coat, chat, echo, tool, loot, heal, heat, clot, loco, colt, hale, hate, coal; five-letter words: cocoa, teach, hotel, catch, cheat, coach; longer words: locate, chalet, ocelot.

**AZTEC WORD SEARCH:**



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Aeme Design Company: Locator Map, p.2; Sun Worshipers, p.18; Aztec Match-up, Chocolate Words, p.19. Michael Kline Illustration: Cartoons, cover, pp.6-7,8,12, 17; Sacred Calendar, p.9; Aztec Word Search, p.19.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO NATHAN KATZIN FOR HIS HELP ON THIS ISSUE**



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**ON THE COVER:** Turquoise mask of Quetzalcoatl, Art Archive/British Museum/Eileen Tweedy.

**PICTURE CREDITS:** Acme Design Company: p.18. Art Archive: Antochiv Collection, Mexico/Mireille Vautier, p.6 lower left (Huitzilopochtli); Biblioteca Nacional Madrid/Dagli Orti, p.14 upper center (Montezuma viewing comet); Codex Borbonicus/Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée National, Paris/Dagli Orti, p.12 left (ball game); Museo Ciudad Mexico/Dagli Orti, pp.10-11; Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City/Dagli Orti, p.13 lower center (drum); Nicholas Sapieha, p.16 top left (Palacio Nacional). **Art Resource:** Scala/Codex Magliabecchiano, p.16 top (*volador*); Scala/Codex Magliabecchiano/Biblioteca Nazionale Florence, Italy, p.7 center (sacrifice); Schalwijk/Diego Rivera/Palacio Nacional, Mexico City, p.4 bottom ("The Great City of Tenochtitlan"); Werner Foreman Archive, p.13 bottom left (stamps); Werner Foreman Archive/ British Museum, London, p.7 top left (mirror), p.13 lower right (whistle); Werner Foreman Archive/Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, p.4 center (nose plugs, ear spoons). **Bridgeman Art Library:** Florentine Codex/Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, Italy, p.13 center left (*patolli*); Museo degli Argenti/Palazzo Pitti, Florence, Italy, p.4 top (Aztec ruler); Luis Covarrubias/Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, pp.2-3 top (Tenochtitlan). **Bruce Coleman:** MPL Fogdon, p.6 lower right (quetzal bird). **Corbis Sygma:** Jean Pierre Amet, p.16 lower center (Mexican flag). **Calver Pictures:** p.14 center right (Montezuma), pp.14-15 bottom center (Cortés and his men). **Granger Collection:** p.6 top (model of Great Temple), p.6 center right (Quetzalcoatl), p.7 upper center (knife), p.8 center (solar calendar), p.14 center (Cortés's ship). **Hulton Archive:** p.5 top left (armadillo). **Laurie Platt Winfrey, Inc.:** p.2 lower left (woman weaving), pp.2-3 bottom center (Aztecs leaving Aztlan), p.3 lower center (eagle on cactus), pp.4-5 center (Jaguar and Eagle warriors), pp.4-5 upper center (Montezuma's shield), p.5 bottom center (tribute record), p.7 top right (sacrifice), p.9 bottom center (calendar), p.12 right (*tlachtli* player), p.13 top center (marriage ceremony), p.13 top right (drummers), p.14 lower left (Doña María), p.14 center (Cortés), p.15 center (Cortés taking Montezuma prisoner), p.15 bottom right (figurine with smallpox), p.15 center right (Aztec and Spanish fighting). **Mary Teresa Giancoli:** p.17 top right (family drinking hot chocolate). **National Geographic:** David Hiser, p.16 center left (Xochimilco); **Felipe Davalos Gonzalez:** p.5 center right (Jaguar warriors), p.9 lower right (rekindling fires); **M. Seidler:** p.15 top (Montezuma and Cortés meet); **B. Anthony Stewart:** p.17 lower right (stone jaguar). **Penguin Books:** Philip Hood: p.9 lower left (priest observing night sky). **Photo Researchers:** p.5 top right (hairless dog); Jerry Lodriguss, p.9 center (Milky Way Galaxy). **Soluri & Noletti:** p.3 bottom right (Pyramid of the Sun). **Viesti Collection:** Carl Rosenstein, p.17 center right (sun dance ceremony); Joe Viesti, pp.16-17 center (*volador*).