



The Clash of Cultures: Moctezuma Hosts Cortés

Goals 2000 - Partnerships for
Educating Colorado Students

In Partnership with the **Denver Public Schools**
and the **Metropolitan State College of Denver**

El Alma de la Raza Project



The Clash of Cultures: Moctezuma Hosts Cortés

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Grade 8

**Implementation Time
for Unit of Study: 4-5 weeks**

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El Alma de la Raza Curriculum
and Teacher Training Project**

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The Clash of Cultures: Moctezuma Hosts Cortés

Unit Concepts

- Aztec religion
- Spain's standing in the world
- Moctezuma's preparation for leadership
- Meeting of Aztec and Spanish colonial cultures
- Fall of Tenochtitlán

Standards Addressed by This Unit

Reading and Writing

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

History

Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history. (H6)

Art

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (A4)

Introduction

The defeat of the Aztecs by the Spanish was an improbable victory by most people's standards. When Cortés and his men landed at Veracruz, they were outnumbered by the people who greeted them. They were not welcome in this new land. They were homesick. In fact, Cortés had to burn his own ships in order to prevent mutiny and the loss of his soldiers. Cortés forced the issue, providing his men with a new motivation—survival.

By the time Cortés landed in 1519, the Aztecs had established the magnificent city of Tenochtitlán with a population of 100,000. They governed a territory that included most of Mesoamerica, and numbered about twenty million people. Their dominance in religious and economic affairs was unthreatened. The Aztec emperor, Moctezuma II, was a revered political leader, a warrior, and a high priest. In 1519, the air was filled with expectancy. An ancient myth predicted the return of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl during a “one-reed year.” Moctezuma used his expertise as an astrologer to discover the imminence of Quetzalcoatl's return. His findings prophesied cataclysmic takeover and destruction. Moctezuma's actions toward Cortés reflect a leader who was in constant deliberation concerning the treatment of his unwelcome guest.

The meeting of Moctezuma and Cortés represents a clash in cultures and ideologies. Cortés sought conquest and conversion for his King and his God. He was outraged by the religious practices of the Aztecs. On the other hand, Moctezuma was baffled by the ruthless behavior of the Spaniards, their appetite for gold, and their disrespect for the value of human life. Initially, Moctezuma offered hospitality to this “supposed” Quetzalcoatl. One week after Cortés' arrival, Cortés, with the aid of Malinche (his interpreter), persuaded Moctezuma to agree to his own confinement. It is evident to historians that one word from Moctezuma, at almost any point, could have meant victory for the Aztecs, regardless of “the guns and horses.” Even after the death of Moctezuma and the wrecking of sacred Aztec temples, the Aztec warriors defeated the gold-laden Spaniards on “Noche Triste.” In the diaries of Díaz, it is reported that upon learning of the death of Moctezuma, Cortés sat down under a tree and wept. Perhaps Cortés was weeping for the death of a great leader. Perhaps Cortés was weeping for the death of a friend. Perhaps...Cortés didn't cry at all. If he didn't, he should have. Moctezuma's genius for deliberation opened a crack in the Aztec Cosmos. The “Great Speaker” of the Aztecs could not protect his gods and his people. His sacred city was destroyed.

Implementation Guidelines

It is recommended that this unit be taught to eighth grade students. Each lesson will take two to four 45-minute class periods. Each lesson includes an assessment piece.

Instructional Materials and Resources

The following books and resources are required for implementing this unit as written.

- Lesson 1 *The Aztec Gods and Fate in Ancient Mexico* by Cottie Burland and Werner Forman
Ancient Mysteries: Secrets of the Aztec Empire (video)
- Lesson 2 *Cortés* by Richard Lee Marks
- Lesson 3 *Montezuma: Lord of the Aztecs* by C.A. Burland
The Broken Spears by Miguel Leon-Portilla
- Lesson 4: *A Teacher's Guide to Aztec* by Sharryl Davis Hawke (Denver Museum of Natural History)
Five Letters of Cortés to the Emperor by Hernán Cortés
The Conquest of New Spain by Bernal Díaz
The Broken Spears by Miguel Leon-Portilla
- Lesson 5 *The Broken Spears* by Miguel Leon-Portilla
Moctezuma's Mexico by David Carrasco and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma
The Aztecs by Eduardo Matos Moctezuma
The Course of Mexican History by Michael Meyer

Lesson Summary

- Lesson 1 The Aztecs Establish a Sacred City
 The early history of Tenochtitlán and the essence of Aztec religion.
- Lesson 2 Spain's Standing in the World
 Spain's victory over the Moors at Granada created a new era of Spanish unity and dominance, leading to a new mission of inquisition and conquest. Cortés answered the call to serve God, his King, and to get rich.
- Lesson 3 Moctezuma's Preparation for Leadership
 Moctezuma's training as a priest, an astrologer, and a warrior and his responsibilities as "The Great Speaker" of the Aztec people.
- Lesson 4 The Meeting of Two Cultures
 The meeting of the Aztecs and the Spanish Colonialists created a clash of cultures and inevitably, war. Compare the Aztec and Spanish accounts of the meeting of the two cultures. Analyze and contrast the similarity and differences in their religions, art, and ideas.
- Lesson 5 The Fall of Tenochtitlán
 The defeat of the Aztecs meant the death of an empire and eventually a merging of two cultures.

Lesson 1: The Aztecs Establish a Sacred City

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history. (H6)

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (A4)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students know how societies have been affected by religions and philosophies.

Students will be able to interpret meaning in works of art.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will recreate the myth of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, using dramatization techniques familiar to them.

Students will explain through visual story-frames how the religious beliefs of the Aztecs guided them to find and establish a sacred home at Tenochtitlán.

SPECIFICS

The Aztecs, like the Israelites, spent 200 years looking for their sacred home. They carried with them an effigy of their sacred god Huitzilopochtli (Blue Hummingbird), who is closely related to Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror). Their journey finally ended where an eagle was found perched on a cactus plant, devouring a serpent. This was a sign from Huitzilopochtli that their sacred home had been discovered. Since this sacred spot happened to be on an island in the middle of a lake, Tenochtitlán was a miracle of construction. Huitzilopochtli was the God of War who demanded human hearts as sacrifices in order to feed the sun. The idea was that if the sun wasn't fed enough blood, it would die and the earth would be swallowed in darkness.

The Aztec god who counters Blue Hummingbird is Quetzalcoatl. He is the beneficent power of the universe who symbolizes healing and beauty, who brought weaving and the arts to humankind, and who opposes human sacrifice. Quetzalcoatl myths are based on Topiltzin-Quetzalcoatl, lord of the Toltecs at Tula in about 730 A.D. Early legends tout his gift of gigantic corn, and crops of cotton and cocoa that were enormous in size and color. However, the old god of the Toltecs, Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror) was jealous of this new and gentler god. The idea of human sacrifices had to remain paramount.

One of the myths portrays Tezcatlipoca entering the house of Quetzalcoatl in disguise, pretending to offer "medicine" that would cure the illness and aging of Quetzalcoatl. The medicine was actually *pulque*, a strong alcoholic type of drink. After becoming intoxicated, Quetzalcoatl sent for his sister, to share the drink with her. They abandoned their religious ways and committed incest. The next morning, Quetzalcoatl was so devastated by his actions that he decided to go into exile. He and his followers exited through Cholula, where a shrine was erected to Quetzalcoatl, and then exited the Gulf of Mexico on rafts, heading east. It is said that Topiltzin-Quetzalcoatl promised his return and takeover of the throne during a one-reed year. Important details to remember: Topiltzin was light-skinned and bearded, and he left sailing to the East.

Lesson 1 (cont.)

Topiltzen-Quetzalcoatl established the lineage of kings for the Toltecs, later adopted by the Aztecs. Hence, Moctezuma II was actually a descendent of this first Quetzalcoatl king.

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Review the myth of Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl found in *The Aztec Gods and Fate in Ancient Mexico*, chapter 3, “Quetzalcoatl: the Feathered Serpent.” Summarize the myth, in all its complexity, and reproduce copies for the students to read. A brief summary is given in the “Specifics” section, above.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Guided reading

Dramatization

Observation/note-taking

Story maps

ACTIVITIES

In groups of five or six students, read the Quetzalcoatl myth. Then create reenactments of the myth, using a narrator. Perform each group’s version of the myth for the rest of the class. In the next class, students will view the video *Ancient Mysteries: Secrets of the Aztec Empire*. Take notes on the religious beliefs of the Aztecs, their art and architecture. What is the relationship of the art and architecture to the religious practices and beliefs of the Aztecs? Share your notes and discuss important ideas at the end of the video. Keep your notes for use in the next class exercise. In class three, students will create story-maps that reveal the importance of the Aztec gods in the founding of Tenochtitlán as their sacred city.

VOCABULARY

effigy

Portrait or statue matching the likeness of a person or possibly a god; sometimes it is a negative portrayal

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

The Aztec Gods and Fate in Ancient Mexico by Cottie Burland and Werner Forman

Ancient Mysteries: Secrets of the Aztec Empire (video)

Lesson 1 (cont.)

ASSESSMENT

Story maps will be evaluated according to their inclusiveness of the following events:

- Aztecs were wanderers with no permanent home. They carry with them an effigy of Huitzilopochtli.
- Aztecs find the sacred spot where an eagle is perched on a cactus plant, devouring a serpent.
- Aztecs make their sacred home in the middle of Lake Texacoco and call it Tenochtitlán. They honor Huitzilopochtli.
- Aztecs also honor the God Quetzalcoatl. Kings are chosen in in the line of the old Toltec King Topiltzan Quetzalcoatl.
- So Moctezuma II is actually Moctezuma Quetzalcoatl. He must serve Huitzilopochtli, but his deeper allegiance is to the possible return and takeover of Quetzalcoatl.
- Cortés' arrival from the East actually fits the picture imagined for Quetzalcoatl's return.
- Examples of art and architecture should be included in each story frame.

Lesson 2: Spain's Standing in the World

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students will make connections between prior knowledge and what they have to know about a topic before reading about it.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will demonstrate their understanding of Spain's unity after the recent defeat of the Moors in 1492.

Students will demonstrate the importance for Spain of financial, religious, and territorial conquests.

SPECIFICS

Spain's unity was not achieved until 1492, when the Moors were defeated at Granada, their last stronghold. The marriage of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castille created the first real unity for Spain. The task was then to create even greater unity for the country by conducting the Inquisition and converting Spain's populace to Christianity. Christopher Columbus made an important voyage, supported by Spain's monarchs, and the story of conquests for Spain begin. Cortés steps into history at this point, answering the call issued by his country to continue the Inquisition, to colonize more territory for his King and his God, and to bring home the riches of conquest.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Pre-reading

Teacher-guided timeline

Independent reading

Word map

ACTIVITIES

In small groups, brainstorm what you already know about Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Spain's role in colonizing America, and Hernán Cortés. Present your knowledge to the class. Independently read pp. 19–39 in *Cortés* by Richard Lee Marks. Take notes on your reading. Your notes should focus on Spain's struggle to become a unified nation, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Spain's role in colonizing America, and the education and experience of Hernán Cortés. In small groups, create a word map poster advertising Spain's opportunities in the "New World." Then, imagine you are Hernán Cortés. Write a one-page letter to Emperor Charles V, explaining why you want to become a conquistador. Emphasize what you think you can do for the crown of Spain. Remember to include your qualifications and training.

Lesson 2 (cont.)

VOCABULARY

conquistador	Conqueror, especially for the Spanish crown
manifest destiny	God-given right a country has to claim “new” territory for their God
Inquisition	The purging of “impure” religions from a country or area; most commonly, the purging was done to maintain Christianity as the chosen religion

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Cortés by Richard Lee Marks

ASSESSMENT

Evaluate the student’s understanding of Spain’s standing in the world by giving the a short essay test including the following questions:

Write a paragraph answer to each question:

1. Why was unity so difficult for Spain to achieve?
2. What were the two events that created the greatest unity for Spain in 1492?
3. How did Spain’s policy of colonization strengthen Spain’s standing in the world?
4. What motivated Cortés to want to become a conquistador?

Lesson 3: Moctezuma's Preparation for Leadership

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students will read literature to understand places, people, events, and vocabulary, both familiar and unfamiliar.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will create a narrative describing a day in the life of Moctezuma as a young boy.

SPECIFICS

Moctezuma was trained as a priest, an astrologer, and a warrior. His understanding of his role as "The Great Speaker" included his responsibility to adore Huitzlapochtli and to feed the sun god with human sacrifices. As an astrologer, Moctezuma consulted the wisdom revealed in the rhythms of the movement of the stars. He based his actions on predictions of future occurrences. Preceding the entry of Cortés in 1519, Moctezuma was fully warned through signs and omens of the impending destruction of Tenochtitlán. At the age of thirty-four, Moctezuma was elected *tlatoani* or "The Great Speaker" of his people, with full powers to direct all military actions in an empire that included most of Mesoamerica.

What will be done to help the students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Individual reading
Summarizing main concepts
Visualization and verbalization
Creative writing

ACTIVITIES

Take notes on the main concepts presented to you by your teacher. Read chapter 2, "Childhood" and chapter 3, "The Temple and Military Schools" in *Montezuma: Lord of the Aztecs* by C.A. Burland. Use the pictures or "codices" in the book to help you visualize a day in the life of the young Moctezuma. Pretend you are Moctezuma's best friend at the age of 15. Write a narration telling about a typical day in your friend's life. Be sure to present Moctezuma's training for the three aspects of his role as astrologer, priest, and warrior. See chapter 1, "Omens Foretelling the Arrival of the Spaniards."

VOCABULARY

<i>tlatoani</i>	"Great Speaker," lord, emperor of all the Aztec people
codex	Picture of an event, instead of a word

Lesson 3 (cont.)

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Montezuma: Lord of the Aztecs by C.A. Burland

The Broken Spears by Miguel Leon-Portilla

ASSESSMENT

Students will create an acceptance speech that would have been appropriate for Moctezuma II on the day of his inauguration as *tlatoni* or “Great Speaker” of his people. Evaluate the student’s inclusion and understanding of the following:

- Moctezuma’s understanding of his role as a warrior: to protect and provide for his people and rule over the Empire.
- Moctezuma’s duty as a priest to honor Huitzlapochtli as the supreme god of the Aztecs, and serve him with gifts of human hearts.
- Moctezuma’s duty as a priest to preserve the temples of all the gods of the Aztecs who help keep the world in balance.
- Moctezuma’s privilege as an astrologer to divine the future and to make decisions based on those predictions.
- Moctezuma’s role as a preserver of social order in Tenochtitlán.

Lesson 4: The Meeting of Two Cultures

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)
Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

BENCHMARK(S)

The students will recognize, express, and defend points of view orally and in writing.
The student will read classic and contemporary literature representing various cultural and ethnic traditions from throughout the world.

OBJECTIVE(S)

The student will demonstrate ability to recognize an author's point of view, purpose, and historical and cultural context through a reenactment of the meeting between Cortés and Moctezuma.

SPECIFICS

In the year 1519, the air was filled with expectancy because of the ancient myth predicting the return of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl. Moctezuma used his knowledge as an astologist to determine whether this one-reed year would indeed mark the time of Quetzalcoatl's return. A number of signs and omens seemed to indicate that the answer was positive. Cortés' arrival at Veracruz in 1519 matched the picture of Quetzalcoatl's expected return. Cortés was light-skinned and bearded. He sailed from the East, and the sailing ships had a cloud-like appearance worthy of a god. Moctezuma's welcome, however, was somewhat two-faced. He sent lavish gifts of gold to Cortés, but they were intended to encourage his rapid departure. Moctezuma also directed Cortés to Cholula, the sacred city of Quetzalcoatl, supposedly for a reception. However, Cortés, through his interpreter, discovered a plot to ambush him. He retaliated with such devastating results that Moctezuma dreaded the news of Cortés' intention to meet him in person. But the meeting took place and Moctezuma opened his doors to Cortés and his men, greeting them as guests. This new rapport did not last long, however. Moctezuma housed his guests in his father's palace, then proceeded to placate them with more gifts of gold and a tour of the sacred city. Cortés quickly realized that he was being treated as if he were a long-expected god. Through his interpreter, Cortés announced his personal mission to claim the city for his king and his God. Moctezuma was appalled at the Spaniards' unholy appetite for gold. It was also clear that the Spaniards shed lives without sacrificing the blood to a god. For the Aztecs, this was a waste, since all prisoners of war could become the necessary food for the gods. Cortés and his men were repulsed by the ritual sacrifices and the glorification of blood. They tried to erase the evidence of the sacrifices and purify the temples by tearing down the Aztec gods and erecting their own. A miracle of translation occurred when Cortés and his interpreter, Malinche, convinced Moctezuma to place himself under house arrest in the palace of Moctezuma's father. This event is recorded in a letter from Cortés to the King of Spain and by Bernal Díaz in his diary. It also appears in the Aztec codices.

Lesson 4 (cont.)

During Cortés' absence from the city, Captain Alvarez brutally murdered Aztec nobility and priests during a ritual dance. War broke out. Upon Cortés' return, the Spaniards were defeated and a small minority barely escaped with their lives. Moctezuma was killed in the conflict and Tenochtitlán was left weakened by war disease. Many temples were desecrated and the images of the gods themselves were thrown down. The Aztecs were, however, the champions temporarily.

What will be done to help the students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read alouds

Outlining

Playwriting

Scene presentations

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

The Denver Museum of Natural History has published an excellent study guide that presents the meeting of the Spanish and Aztec cultures. It is entitled *A Teacher's Guide to Aztec*. Read especially "The Fall of the Aztec Empire" (p. 84) and "The Meeting of Two Cultures" (p. 96). It provides details and an excellent overview of material covered in this unit. Also, the beginning chapters are excellent on the early history of the Aztecs.

ACTIVITIES

Read aloud the following excerpts representing the conflict as told by the Spanish Colonialists and by the Aztecs:

Five Letters of Cortés to the Emperor by Hernán Cortés, pp. 63–79

The Conquest of New Spain by Bernal Díaz, pp. 216–219; 245–250

The Broken Spears by Miguel Leon-Patilla, pp. 32–36; 62–90

After reading the excerpts, outline the different groups of people and individuals represented at the meeting of Cortés and Moctezuma. (Teacher's Note: These groups and individuals include Moctezuma, Cortés, Aztec warriors, Aztec priests, Spanish warriors, Spanish priests, Malinche, Captain Alvarez, Cuitlahuac—Moctezuma's brother and successor.) In small groups, evaluate the readings to determine the values and expectations of each group represented and the individuals. Divide into groups of two or three people each and write a short inner monologue for one group or individual, including inner thoughts, fears, hopes, and expectations. A volunteer group is needed to write the script of the exterior words and actions that occurred when Cortés and Moctezuma actually met. Use the excerpts to create a scene that merges the three accounts read at the beginning of this lesson.

VOCABULARY

omen	Thing or happening supposed to tell a future event, either good or evil
rapport	Agreement; harmony

Lesson 4 (cont.)

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Five Letters of Cortés to the Emperor by Hernán Cortés

The Conquest of New Spain by Bernal Díaz

The Broken Spears by Miguel Leon-Patilla

ASSESSMENT

Stage the scene using exterior words and actions of the meeting of Cortés and Moctezuma. Use freeze techniques to call up the inner monologues of each of the individuals and groups of people represented. Students will be assessed on their ability to evaluate the excerpts as a record of human experience and as a reflection of religious and cultural perspectives. They will be expected to empathize with the goals of each group or individual and to translate that empathy into a dramatic presentation. Is there an effective balance between each student's understanding of the risks involved in this meeting, as opposed to the possibilities? Is the clash of cultures evident in the inner monologues of the groups or individuals represented? In a group discussion, can the students identify and define the various factors in this eventual clash of cultures?

Lesson 5: The Fall of Tenochtitlán

What will the students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and understand literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

BENCHMARK(S)

Read literature that reflects the uniqueness, diversity, and integrity of the American experience.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will read and respond to Aztec poetry.

Students will synthesize their understanding of the fall of Tenochtitlán into original poetry of their own.

SPECIFICS

The Aztecs defeated the Spaniards on “la Noche Triste,” July 10, 1520. Unfortunately, the Spaniards left behind smallpox, a lethal disease for which the Aztecs had no immunity. Thousands of people, including the new *tlatoani*, Cuitlahuac, died from smallpox. On May 31, 1521, Cortés returned to Tenochtitlán, blocked the causeways, and used armed vessels to attack the Aztecs from the lake. Cortés’ battle strategy, combined with the weakened condition of the Aztecs, resulted in victory for the Spanish. On August 13, 1521, the Aztec empire fell as the sacred city of Tenochtitlán crumbled and burned.

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Select and reproduce for students two or three Aztec poems translated into English. Recommended poems include:

“Poem of the Conquest,” *The Aztecs* by Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, p. 165.

“The Fall of Tenochtitlán,” *The Broken Spears* by Miguel Leon-Portilla, p. 146.

Other excellent examples of poetry are found in *The Aztecs* by Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, “Music and Poetry” pp. 162–172 and in *The Broken Spears*, chapter 15, “Elegies on the Fall of the City.”

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Shared readings

Guided readings

Discussions

Pre-writing

Creative writing

Lesson 5 (cont.)

ACTIVITIES

Read the summary entitled, “The Spaniards Regroup,” pp. 124–129 in *The Course of Mexican History*. This reading will give you a clear idea of the final 75-day battle that brought victory for the Spaniards.

In small groups, decide on an Aztec poem you wish to analyze. Discuss your answers to the following questions, then present your ideas to the whole class:

- What qualities make Aztec poetry unique?
- What ideas or beliefs seem to be represented in the poem you have chosen?
- List several examples of similes and metaphors used.
- Describe the tone of the poem you have chosen.

Now, individually, choose an event or some aspect of the final 75-day battle and fall of Tenochtitlán. Do some pre-writing to let your ideas flow freely. Then synthesize your thoughts and feelings into a poem concerning the fall of the Aztec empire. (See *The Broken Spears*, chapters 13–14, for the Aztec view.)

VOCABULARY

tone	Manner of writing or speaking that shows a certain attitude on the part of the writer or speaker
causeway	Raised path or road, as across wet ground or water

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

The Broken Spears by Miguel Leon-Portilla

Moctezuma’s Mexico by David Carrasco and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma

The Aztecs by Eduardo Matos Moctezuma

The Course of Mexican History by Michael Meyer

reproduced copies of Aztec poems

ASSESSMENT

The students will read their original poetry for the rest of the class. The poetry will be evaluated by the following criteria:

- Does the poem include some particular aspect of the Aztecs’ historical experience as their sacred city fell?
- Is the student expressing his or her own thoughts and feelings about the fall of Tenochtitlán?
- Is the author’s tone evident in the poem?
- Does the author succeed in communicating a strong emotion or idea in the poem?

Unit Assessment

How will students demonstrate proficiency?

PERFORMANCE TASK

For your final assessment, you will be given a two-part exercise. The first part will be to create a chart that compares two contrasting worlds. The chart will be called “Portrait of Two Cultures.” The second part will be to use the chart to prepare an interview with either Hernán Cortés or Moctezuma II for a radio show entitled: “This Is Your Life!”

Divide into small groups that are no larger than six people each. Brainstorm ideas to fill out the chart, Portrait of Two Cultures. Remember to use knowledge and ideas from all lessons covered. After you have filled out the chart, decide which of the two leaders you want to prepare an interview for. You will need to prepare a script that includes both the interview questions and the answers. Then, you will need to cast one member of your group as the host for “This Is Your Life!” and one as either Moctezuma or Cortés. The remaining group members may choose to create advertisements, flashback scenes, or ask questions as audience members. Remember, this is a radio show, so words and sound effects are the most effective communicators. When you have finished your script, it is important to rehearse several times in order to feel confident in your performance. The final radio shows will be presented to the entire class. A discussion will follow each radio show to bring out the strongpoints of each presentation.

A scoring rubric is included below.

SCORING RUBRIC

4. Interview reflects knowledge and creative thinking regarding religion, art, politics, leadership, and military strengths and weaknesses. Radio show is enhanced by rich personalities drawn for both the interviewer and either Moctezuma or Cortés. Additional ideas have been added in the form of flashbacks, advertisements, and evaluative questions.
3. Interview reflects knowledge and creative thinking regarding three or four of the following: religion, art, politics, leadership, and military strengths and weaknesses. Radio show is enhanced by the rich personality of either Moctezuma or Cortés, but the interviewer is not a fully drawn personality. Additional ideas have been added, and they are mostly successful.
2. Interview reflects knowledge in one or two of the following areas: religion, art, politics, leadership, and military strengths and weaknesses. Very little creative thinking about the knowledge areas is demonstrated. Radio show is slightly enhanced by the rich personality of the interviewer, but Cortés/Moctezuma are not fully depicted. Additional ideas have been added, but they are not successful.
1. Interview reflects little or no knowledge of the following areas: religion, art, politics, leadership, and military strengths and weaknesses. No creative thinking about the knowledge areas is demonstrated. Radio show does not reflect believable personalities. No additional ideas have been added, or the ideas aren't making an effective contribution.

Portrait of Two Cultures

	Aztecs	Spanish Colonialists
Religion	human sacrifice	symbolic sacrifice of God's only son
Art		
Politics	Aztec Empire	Spain's conquests
Leadership	Moctezuma	Cortés
Military	no horses, small dogs	some horses, big dogs

Bibliography

Burland, Cottie and Werner Forman. *The Aztec Gods and Fate in Ancient Mexico*. New York: Putnam, 1973.

A strong presentation of the gods Quetzalcoatl (the Feathered Serpent) and Tezcatlipoca (the Smoking Mirror) and the dichotomy they represent in Aztec culture.

Burland, C.A. *Montezuma: Lord of the Aztecs*. G.P. Putnam's Sons: New York, 1973.

Narrative focusing on the life of the last great Aztec Emperor. Excellent source for Moctezuma's early education and training for leadership. Also emphasizes the importance of the Quetzalcoatl myth in the defeat of the Aztecs.

Carrasco, David and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma. *Moctezuma's Mexico*. Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1992.

Excellent overview of Aztec society during the rule of Moctezuma II. Especially strong on Aztec history and cosmovision. Poetry and art included.

Cortés, Hernán. *Five Letters of Cortés to the Emperor*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1969.

Extraordinary documentation of Cortés' rationale and perception of his conquest of Mexico.

Díaz, Bernal. *The Conquest of New Spain*. London: Penguin Books, 1963.

The edited chronicles of the oldest surviving conquistador who served under the leadership of Cortés. Full of details of events and the personalities of Cortés and Moctezuma II.

Hawke, Sharryl Davis. *A Teacher's Guide to Aztec*. Denver: Denver Museum of Natural History, 1992.

Simplified summary of the meeting and confrontation of Aztec and Spanish Colonial cultures. Great instructional resources for interdisciplinary study.

Leon-Portilla, Miguel. *The Broken Spears*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.

Aztec accounts of the death of Tenochtitlán as told by survivors through prose, poetry, and art. Best Aztec source available.

Marks, Richard Lee. *Cortés*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

A biography of Cortés, including his background, his emergence as a conquistador, and his ruthless conquests. Provides an understanding of the cultures of both Spaniards and Aztecs.

Meyer, Michael C. and William L. Sherman. *The Course of Mexican History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

The most complete overview of Mexican history, beginning with the first Mexicans and continuing through the present.

Moctezuma, Eduardo Matos. *The Aztecs*. New York: Rizzoli, 1989.

Presents a comprehensive picture of the fall of the Aztec empire through their poetry and art, especially art and design.

A&E Television Networks. *Ancient Mysteries: Secrets of the Aztec Empire*. New York: New Video Group, 1996.

Discusses the early history of the Aztecs, their art, and religious practices. Includes the clash with Cortés.

About the Author

Sallie Baker was born in Waco, Texas in 1947. Her mother and father were both professors at Baylor University. When she was five years old, her parents took their family and a group of theatre students to Paris to study the avant-garde art of Europe. Sallie's house in Waco was a meeting place for some exceptional people, including Charles Laughton, Frank Lloyd Wright, Burgess Meredith, Elliott Ellisofen, and Etienne Decroux.

Sallie graduated *cum laude* from Trinity University with a B.A. and an M.F.A. in Speech and Drama. Her masters thesis was an original play entitled *Stillson*. It received a full production at the Dallas Theatre Center, at Lincoln Center in Fort Collins, and was filmed for a PBS Rehearsal and Performance Series. Another of Sallie's plays, *Door-Play*, was produced at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. In her role as a children's theatre teacher, Sallie has written and developed numerous plays with and for children. In 1990, Sallie received *Westword's* "Best Director" award for her direction of *Under Milk Wood* at the University of Colorado-Denver.

In the middle of her career, Sallie devoted ten years to the parenting of her two sons, Jamie and Paul Laurie. She then returned to teaching as a guest artist in the pilot project for the highly gifted at University Park Elementary School, and later at Columbine and Harrington Elementary Schools. Her college teaching includes classes in theatre, speech, oral interpretation, and creative writing at the Community College of Denver, University of Colorado-Denver, and University of Denver. She has also worked for Texas Arts Councils giving integrated arts workshops for teachers.

Sallie is completing her sixth year as a teacher with Denver Public Schools. She was hired originally, through the alternative certification process, to be the theatre teacher for Cole/Denver School of the Arts. After four years in that role, Sallie asked for a chance to teach Language Arts, a job she has held for two years. She is currently on the faculty at Denver School of the Arts, in its new location at Byers.