

Compare and  
contrast the lifestyles  
of two ancient  
american civilizations  
essay



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Ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica may seem entirely equal at times, but the truth about these civilizations is that the differences may be nearly secret or completely obvious. What comes to mind as two nearly identical cultures from Mesoamerica, the Aztecs and the Mayans have many other differences and similarities that help distinguish one from the other.

Factors such as social classes show why a fusion of both cultures may occur in this region. Religion and agriculture are also two other factors that may give a sense of similarity, but also show the difference among them.

Sometimes when thinking about the Aztecs and the Mayans there isn't consideration for the things that make them different because of the impartiality of their location. Ideas such as Social classes may lead to believe in this as well.

When looking at the social classes of Mayans, the only two classes are the Nobles and the Commoners, the Nobles clearly being at the top. Very similar are the Aztec social classes. The highest of rank being the Nobles, followed by the Commoners, and then slaves ending up at the bottom of the pack. The two are clearly identical in having a noble power at the top and some kind of commoner. The difference being the slaves that the Aztecs had, but the reason for these slaves brings forth another difference among these two cultures. The slaves of the Aztecs had quite a bit to do with their culture and strong religious beliefs.

The religion of the Aztecs includes numerous sacrifices to their gods. The Mayans also sacrificed to their gods and they also did it frequently, however not as often as the Aztecs. When it came to the Aztecs they would sacrifice

anyone, but they sacrificed their slaves and captives the most. Other religious comparisons include the way they both were Polytheistic.

They both had a major belief in their main god, the sun god; however the Aztecs named their god Huitzilopochtli. It was believed in both cultures that the sun god brought warmth to the world and needed human blood in order to be nourished, hence the sacrifices. A belief that the Mayans had that the Aztecs did not is the belief in the cosmos. They thought that reality was broken up into three sections; heaven, the human world, and the underworld. Religion is still similar between these cultures, but the differences are a tad more obvious compared to other topics.

Agriculture, the art of crop production, is used differently in these ancient Mesoamerican cultures. The Aztecs used land to grow their food, but to become more efficient, their advanced architectural ways brought forth the regular use of Chinampas. These “floating gardens” grew plants while floating on a body of water. A surplus of food was grown from this method.

The Mayans may not have been as skilled to come up with such a brilliant idea, but their ideas also accomplished a lot. Terraces were cut into the sides of hills and mountains so they could have more stable land to grow food, and they had a massive irrigation system to be able to water the large quantity of crops in the diverse temperatures of this region. Although different in agricultural methods, the plentiful method of growing crops in both cultures was obviously successful. When thinking about the Aztecs and the Mayans, confusion might fill the air as to whether there is any kind of difference

amongst them. They are similar in being from the Central American region, but a lot of details remain that distinguish them.

Little details that come from the social classes, larger details that differentiate religion, and complete dissimilarity in agriculture help keep both cultures different but not completely out of sync. Cultures that seem so similar to the world and may cause uncertainty have many elements that broaden mindset to cause more clarity and understanding.