

Section 4

Question 31-40

You are going to hear a lecture about the achievements of the ancient Aztecs of Central America. You now have some time to read questions 31 to 40.

Good evening. Good to see so many people here, to learn about the fascinating civilization of the Aztecs. By the way is the microphone working? You can hear, okay at the back? Good. Let's go back to 1519 AD. Anyone know what happened in that year? Right, Hernan Cortez landed on that part of Central America, that is today known as Mexico. He expected to find gold and he did. What he did not expect to find however, was the great Aztec civilization. Aztec legend said they originated in the plains of Northwestern Mexico and slowly migrated Southward. When they arrived at Lake Texcoco in 1325, they founded their great Capital Tenochtitlan on the site of what is now, Mexico City.

The Aztecs developed a complex society and governmental structure at the head of which was the emperor. They made many scientific advances, especially in the areas of astronomy and medicine. They also had a complicated religion and interest in the arts, agriculture and social conditions occupied much of their time. Let's talk about their remarkable achievements in some of these areas. You cannot do much if you don't have food to eat. So let's first take a look at their farming practices. The land that the Aztecs farmed was not fertile enough to grow enough food to support the growing population. So they were forced to invent methods to increase productivity including irrigation, fertilizer and even building terraces on hills to protect soil from running off. Like we see today in China, the Philippines and many other parts of the world. But one thing we don't see was their very original idea of China pas spelled c-- h-- i-- n-- a pas. China pas were floating gardens built on swamps. Actually, they were quite simple to make. First, canals were dug through the marshes and swamps. Then mud from the canals was placed on mats woven from weeds and straw. These mats were quite big. Maybe five or six meters long and two across. Trees were then planted in the bed of the swamp at the corners of each mat. The trees took root and the china pas were held firmly in place. The Aztecs used these floating gardens to plant their main corn and also vegetables like beans, chili peppers avocados, squash and tomatoes. The Aztecs were very advanced in some ways, but they didn't use animals or ploughs to help them work the land. In fact, they didn't even have the wheel.

No problem. This soil on the China pass was soft enough that pointed sticks were all they needed to plant crops on them. But the Aztecs were much more than imaginative gardeners. They made great advances in the sciences, especially astronomy. I'm sure many of you have heard of the Aztecs calendar stone. It took them 52 years from 1427 to 1479 to build the calendar stone. It was huge. A massive piece of rock, three feet thick, 12 feet in diameter and weighing about 24 tons on which they carved pictographs for the days and months of the Aztec calendar.

This showed just how advanced the Aztecs were in the science of astronomy. It makes me think of the clean air they enjoyed in those days, when they could see all the stars shining so brightly in the night sky. They would have had a big problem doing this in most parts of the world nowadays, but back to the calendar stone. It had 18 months, each of 20 days namely 360 days made one year, but they had long before worked out that there are 365 days in a year.

So they added five days which they called the Neman Tammy or sacrificial days to get 365. Remember? This was 103 years before the Gregorian calendar that we use today. Very sophisticated, those Aztec astronomers. And they were not only clever astronomers. The Aztecs made great advances in medicine. At the time many Europeans looked down on the herbal medicine of the Aztecs as a heathen practice just like they used to look down on traditional Chinese or African medicine. But, in fact, Aztec doctors could do more than even the best doctors in Europe.

Their medicine was primarily based on spiritual healing and herbal healing. Spiritual because they believed many illnesses were caused by such things as an angry God or bad breath signs. So their first step in treating an illness was always prayer and sometimes animal sacrifice. But they also used herbal medicine and concentrated much of their medical science on finding out what herbs could do, just like the ancient Chinese doctors. So, over Generations, the Aztecs accumulated a vast knowledge of the herbs in the world around them and the medicinal properties of each one. One difference with traditional Chinese medicine is that the Aztecs concentrated more on curing the symptoms of a disease than getting at the cause of the disease. They felt that if a God or Goddess wished to make them ill, then they could do nothing about the root cause, namely a God. If the medicine worked, it meant that the gods approved of the patient getting well again.

Question 31-34

Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer

- 31. Today, what stands on the site of Tenochtitlan?
- 32. The Aztecs prevented soil run-off by
- 33. To prepare for chinampas, the Aztecs first
- 34. The Aztecs used those floating gardens to plant vegetables like (name any 3 kinds of vegetables)

Question 35-38

Complete the table below.

Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS OR A NUMBER** for each answer.

Data on the Aztec's Calendar Stone	
The number of years needed to make it	35
Dimensions	Thickness: 3 feet
	Diameter. 36 feet
	Weight: approx 24 tons

Number of months in a year	18
The number of days in each month	37
English meaning of "Nemontemi"	38

Question 39-40

Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer.

39. Apart from angry gods, what did the Aztecs blame for disease?

40. What did Aztec doctors do to treat an illness?