

Aztec Art



Aztec art was incredibly important and was often made mainly for religious reasons, as a way of honouring the gods. The Aztecs decorated the walls of their temples with carvings and created enormous stone sculptures of their gods. They also fashioned much smaller pieces from jade and quartz, and loved the brightly coloured feathers of birds such as macaws and parrots. The Aztecs also had a rich and varied tradition of pottery, producing ceramic pieces that they decorated with paintings, carvings and stamps. The finest of these were kept for the rich or for



Animals such as crocodiles, lizards, snakes, deer, rabbits, monkeys, jaguars and eagles featured a lot in Aztec art. On the famous Aztec sunstone, many of the days are represented by animals.

This week, we would like you to create some of art inspired by these Aztec patterns. How you do this is up to you.

- You may wish to sketch, colour or paint your patterns
- You may wish to use chalk or charcoal
- You may wish to get outside and make your patterns with natural objects that you find in the garden or during your daily outdoor exercise
- You may wish to create a 3D model using play dough, clay or plasticine
- You could even do some Aztec printing (see the next page for instructions)/

There is some inspiration below or, alternatively, can you carry out some of your own research to find some more Aztec patterns and symbols? Be as creative as you like. Enjoy!



Aztec Printing

What You Need

- Strong card- an old cardboard box would be perfect
- String
- Scissors
- Paint
- White glue (such as PVA)



1. Sketch out your design/designs onto some paper.
2. Keep your design as simple as possible (it can be a little fiddly!), using clear, bold lines.
3. Cut a square of cardboard that is bigger than your design.
4. Glue your design to the cardboard.
5. Add a layer of glue over your design and begin to add string, following the lines that you have drawn.
6. To secure the string, add another layer of glue and then leave to dry.
7. Using a roller or a paintbrush, cover your string picture with paint.
8. Print your design onto plain paper.



The Aztec Sunstone

The Aztec people carved the sunstone, sometimes also called Cuauhxicalli (Eagle Bowl) from solidified lava stone in the late 1400s. It was lost for 300 years and was found buried under Mexico City's main square or Zocalo. Weighing 24 tonnes and spanning 3 metres across and 1 metre deep, it seems strange that something of this size was lost in the first place!



In the middle of the stone is the Aztec Sun god, holding a human heart in each hand and his tongue outstretched as a blade used for sacrifices. Around him, the stone shows two calendar systems, one for farming and the other for religious ceremonies.

The farming calendar contains 365 days, broken into groups of 20 days for each of the 18 months. It describes daily rituals, seasons and planting, alongside predicting solar eclipses and disasters.

The religious calendar describes each day in relation to the Aztec gods, with each day given one of 20 names such as jaguar, water, wind or a number between 1-13. This is because Aztec weeks were 13 days long.

As the two calendars work together, days were given a different set of names, numbers and symbols that wouldn't repeat for 52 years. Aztecs believed that when the two calendars aligned, the universe was in danger, so they performed rituals, including sacrifices, to please the gods.



The Aztec Sunstone

Can you create your own Aztec sunstone?

To do this, you will need to draw 4 circles, one within another. You might wish to find, and draw around, some round objects of differing sizes to help you with this. You could, if you wanted to, use a paper plate to draw your sunstone on or you can be as creative as you like!

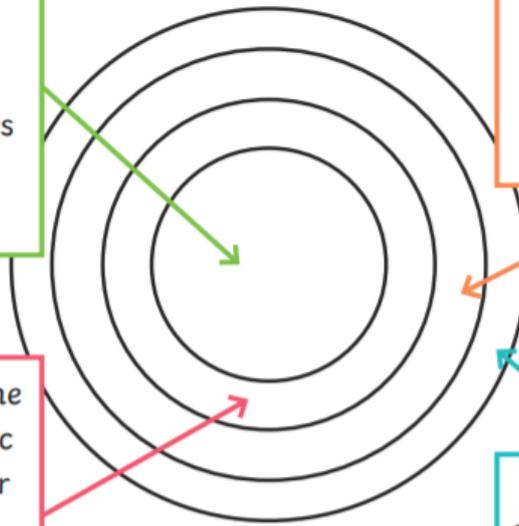
Look closely at the instructions below to help you with your design. You may wish to have a practise first.

Draw a sun with a face in the centre. This is to represent the Aztec sun god. Add features including a tongue and yellow hair.

The Aztec sunstone has carvings of animals such as jaguars and snakes. There are also intricate geometric patterns.

Draw a sun ray pattern. The Aztecs would use geometric shapes such as triangles or rectangles.

Colour a repeating pattern around the edge of the plate.



The Aztecs carved their sun stone but, as we know, there is lots of evidence of bright colours in Aztec clothing. Be inspired by the bright feathers of parrots or macaws and add colours to the details that you have drawn.



Rise of the Aztec Empire

Watch [The Rise and Fall of The Aztecs— Building an Empire](#) on Youtube.



Task 1

Using an atlas or Google maps, find modern day Mexico.

Compare the modern day map with this map of the Aztec Empire.

Where do you think you would have to visit today to visit the ruins of Tenochtitlan?

Can you find Lake Texcoco on the modern map? Why do you think this might be?



Task 2

Look at the flag or modern day Mexico.

What connection can you see to the Aztec Empire and the capital of Tenochtitlan?



Life in the Aztec Empire

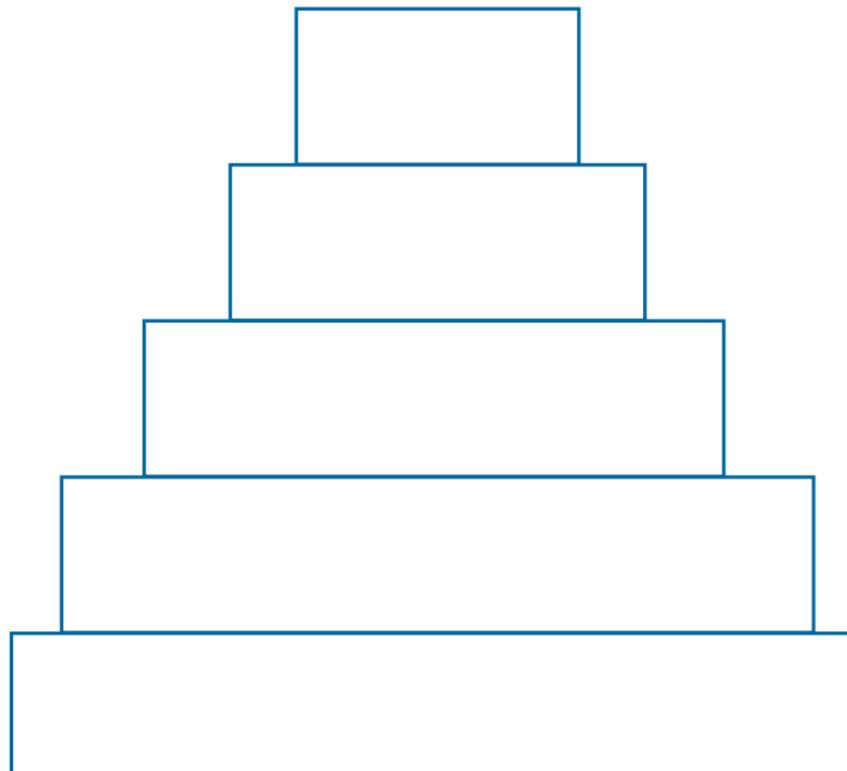
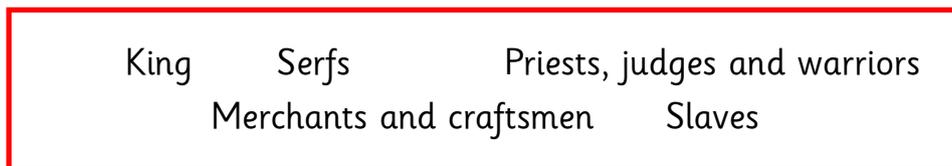
Watch [The Aztecs for Kids](#) on YouTube.



Task 3

Copy or fill out the diagram below with the following groups of Aztec society.

Who would be at the top of the pyramid? Who would be at the bottom?



Go deeper: Can you add an illustration for each section? Can you add any extra information about each part of Aztec society?