

*Mr. Donn and Maxie's PowerPoint® Series*

## **Incas, Maya, Aztecs**

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# The Incredible Incas: Children of the Sun

# Who Were the Incas?

The Incas were a small tribe of South American Indians who lived in the city of Cuzco, high in the Andes Mountains of Peru. Around 1400 CE, a neighboring tribe attacked the Incas, but the Incas won. This was the beginning of the Inca Empire.

In only 100 years, the Inca Empire grew so big that it expanded into what are now the modern countries of Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Bolivia and Argentina.



# Inca Government

One thing that helped the Incas grow so rapidly was their system of a strong central government. Everybody worked for the state, and in turn the state looked after everybody.

**Sapa Inca:** The head of government was the Inca, sometimes called the “Sapa Inca” (“the Only Inca”). The Sapa Inca was all-powerful. Everything belonged to the Sapa Inca. He ruled his people by putting his relatives in positions of power. Since punishment was harsh and swift, almost no one broke the law.



Teacher’s notes: The Sapa Inca was at the top of the pyramid. Next came the four members of the Supreme Council. Each member ruled one of the Four Quarters that made up the Inca Empire. Each quarter was divided into regions. Each region was divided again, and so on. Judges, army officers, top officials, and tax collectors were all relatives of the Sapa Inca.

# Common People Had No Freedom

The Incas were very class conscious and were divided into nobles and common people. The nobles pretty much did what they wanted, while the common people were tightly controlled by the government.



Commoners could not own or run businesses. They could only do their assigned jobs. The law did not allow them to be idle. Even the amount of time they had to sleep and bathe was controlled by a government official.

Teacher's notes: Workers were organized into family units. Each unit had 10–20 people. Their life was not all work: there were many joyous religious festivals. However, they could not do anything without the government's permission. They could not even walk along the roads without permission.

When the Inca made a new law, he told the top tax collectors. They told the tax collectors who reported to them, who told the next level down, and so on, until everyone in the empire heard the news. Since the workers could not vote or voice an opinion, that would then be the law until the Inca made a new decree.

NOTE: The Incas did not invent the alarm clock. It is used in this illustration for humor and to emphasize that every minute of every hour of every day was controlled by a government official. If caught wasting a single minute, a commoner could be severely punished.

# Service Tax

Local officials kept an detailed census. A census is an official count of all the people in an area and how they each make a living.

Each common person was listed in the census. Each person listed had to pay a tax. The Incas loved gold and silver, but they had no use for money. The people paid their tax each year in physical labor—serving in the army, working in the mines, or building roads, temples, and palaces.



Teacher's notes: Although the people had no freedom, everyone in the empire was well-fed, and no one was homeless. Everyone had warm clothes to wear. The common people were well treated because they were needed as workers. When times were tough or people retired, the state looked after them.



# Harsh Government Controls

Laws dictated who should work where, and when.

Local officials had the power to make all decisions about the lives of the people they ruled. Inspectors visited frequently to check on things. Breaking the law usually meant the death penalty. Few people broke the law. Tight government controls kept the common people fed, clothed, and enslaved.



Teacher's notes: For a number of reasons, the people never rose up and fought against this system of government: Local officials had the power to assign immediate punishment for crimes against the state—and all crimes were crimes against the state. If you were hoarding food, you were robbing the state. If you overslept, you were robbing the state. Every minute of every hour of every day was controlled.

# Government Questions

1. What was the service tax?
2. Who decided how much service tax was due?
3. Who was the head of Inca government?
4. What freedoms did the common people enjoy?



Answers:

1. The service tax was a tax imposed on all common people that was paid by hours of labor. (The nobles did not pay a service tax.)
2. The Sapa Inca or his local government officials
3. The Sapa Inca
4. None