

Expansion of the Inca Empire Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question
How did the Inca expand their empire?

Materials:

- Inca Empire Expansion PowerPoint
- Copies of Documents A-D
- Copies of Guiding Questions

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction: Expansion of Inca Empire PowerPoint.

- a. Slide 1: Title Slide.
- b. Slides 2-3: Beginnings of the Inca State. *After the decline of the Wari Empire around 1000 or 1100 CE, people in the Andean valleys organized into decentralized clans. They lived in agricultural villages.*

At the start of the 13th century, Manco Cápac banded his clan with some neighboring clans to move to better farmland. Together with Mama Huaco, he settled his clan in the Cusco area. Manco Cápac and Mama Huaco are remembered as the first Sapa Inca (which means only ruler) and coya (queen) and the founders of the Kingdom of Cusco. For two centuries, the kingdom strengthened their foothold in the area.

- c. Slide 4: Expansion, early 1400s-1533. *In the 15th century, the Inca drastically expanded their territory. According to Inca historical accounts, this expansionism began with Sapa Inca Pachacuti in 1438. However, some archaeological evidence suggests that expansion began a bit earlier, shortly after 1400. By 1533, the empire was about 2,400 miles from north to south, encompassed 300,000 square miles, and had a population of 10 to 12 million, making it the largest empire in the Americas to that point. The empire stretched from the north-end of present-day Ecuador all the way down to present-day central Chile. Their expansion halted in the late 1520s due to the Inca Civil War. In 1533, Spanish conquistadors executed Inca Atahualpa, and the Inca Empire disintegrated thereafter.*
- d. Slide 5-6: Inca Society. *Inca society was complex, a mix of long-standing customs and technologies as well as innovation. Poetry, theater, astronomy, textile arts, engineering, and religion were important features of the society. Today, the Inca may be most known for Machu Picchu, one estate of the Sapa Inca Pachacuti. Most Incas were commoners who worked as farmers.*
- e. Slide 7: Tawantinsuyu, The Four Regions, early 1400s-1533. *The Inca expanded their territory and built an empire that they divided into the North,*

South, East, and West Quarters, giving rise to the name of their empire -- Tawantinsuyu, which means "The Four Regions" in Quechua, the official language of the empire. (Millions of people speak Quechua to this day.) The four corners of these quarters intersected at Cusco, the capital of the empire.

- f. Slides 8-9: Tawantinsuyu. *At the top of the state was the Sapa Inca, who was considered divine. Below the Sapa Inca were high religious, government officials, and the nobility. The Inca government provided its subjects with basic necessities like land, clothing, and tools. The government also invested in public works, such as expanding and maintaining over 15 thousand miles of roads and bridges, and building aqueducts, terraces, and food storehouses. The labor required for these public works, as well as for the Inca military, was provided by subjects of the empire, who were required to pay a tax in the form of labor. The Inca state had various communication technologies, including quipus, knotted cords used to record information, and chasquis, running messengers who relayed messages on the highway system with the assistance of quipus and shell horns.*
 - g. Slide 10: Central Historical Question. *The expansion of the Inca Empire in the 15th century was meteoric. It grew from a modest-sized kingdom around Cusco just before the 15th century to a large empire by the early 16th century. This remarkable growth in just over a century has led scholars to seek to understand just how the Inca were able to expand the boundaries of their empire so quickly. Today we're going to examine several sources to explore how the Inca expanded their empire.*
2. Hand out Document A and Guiding Questions. Read the textbook account (Document A) together as a class. Have students complete the corresponding Guiding Questions, then share out responses.

Ask students to reflect on what they noticed from circling the words that indicate the Inca expanded their empire through force and underlining the words that indicate the Inca expanded their empire through ways other than force (Question 1).

Check for student understanding as they complete Question 2 and share out. Students should note that the textbook account mostly describes ways the Inca expanded their empire through force.

3. Hand out Document B. Have students read the document and complete the corresponding Guiding Questions. Share out responses.

Students should note Sarmiento's research methods. He interviewed Inca nobility who drew from their oral histories and *quipus* to tell Sarmiento about Inca history.

However, students should also bear in mind that Sarmiento's account was politically motivated. He sought to discredit the legitimacy of the Inca rulers and to argue that the Spanish were the rightful rulers of the Andes.

Students should also note that Sarmiento wrote this account a century after Pachacuti lived. When evaluating this document and the subsequent documents, support students in seeing how large gaps in time between when a document was produced and the historical events it depicts are relevant to consider but do not necessarily mean the accounts should be completely discarded as evidence.

The account corroborates important elements of the textbook: Pachacuti expanded the empire through force. It differs from the textbook in providing information about the Inca defeat of the Ayarmacas. Students may also wonder whether the textbook's emphasis on the Incas use of force is a legacy of the Spanish campaign for legitimacy to rule Peru. Unfortunately, we don't know which sources the textbook authors used, but this is something to consider in evaluating the textbook's account.

4. Hand out Document C. Have students read the document and complete the corresponding Guiding Questions. Share out responses.

Students should note that the illustration in Excerpt 1 contrasts with the account of the labor the Inca state required from its subjects. They should also note that Excerpt 2 both supports and challenges the textbook account of how the Inca expanded their empire. It supports the textbook's description of the Inca government as well-organized and supports the claim that the Inca conquered other people. It also challenges the textbook's description by characterizing the Inca government, at least when ruled by Topa Inca Yupanqui, as just and the society as prosperous.

5. Hand out Document D. Have students read the document and complete the corresponding Guiding Questions. Share out responses.

Ask students to reflect on what they noticed from circling the words that indicate the Inca expanded their empire through force and underlining the words that indicate the Inca expanded their empire through ways other than force (Question 2).

Students should note that de la Vega's account suggests that the primary way the Inca expanded their empire was through technological innovation and prosperity. This sharply contrasts with the textbook's account.

Note: We strongly encourage you to read through the Original Documents file in its entirety if you choose to use it instead of the modified versions of the

documents included in the Student Materials file with your class. The excerpt in the modified version provides no mention of the Inca using military force to expand their empire, while the Original Documents version includes evidence that the Inca used both military force and non-military strategies. We chose to use the excerpt from Garcilaso de la Vega's *Royal Commentaries* in the Student Materials file because the book as a whole emphasizes the supposed restraint of the Inca army as well as the non-military strategies the Inca used to expand their domain.

6. Whole class discussion. Ask students:
 - a. *Which account do you find to be the most trustworthy? Why?*
 - b. *After reading the textbook account, how did you think the Inca expanded their empire? Did your understanding change after reading the other three documents? If your answer changed, why did it?*
 - c. *What other documents would you want to examine to help answer the question? (If students struggle to think of relevant perspectives or accounts not included in this document set, you can ask them, *Are any of these accounts written by people who were conquered by the Inca? Why would those accounts be important for answering the question? Why might those sources be hard to find?*)*
7. Writing assignment. Ask students to complete the “New Textbook Passage” on the last page of the Guiding Questions. Explain that they should write two paragraphs explaining how the Inca expanded their empire, using evidence from at least two of the historical documents.
8. (Optional) Assessment. In addition to monitoring student learning and understanding during the lesson, you may want to assess student learning later in the unit. One idea would be to use the following History Assessment of Thinking (HAT) from Beyond the Bubble:

<https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-assessments/inca-fortification>

This HAT presents students with a photograph of the ruins of Sacsayhuamán, the Inca fortress north of Cusco. It then asks students to consider both the strengths and weaknesses of a photograph as evidence of Inca fortification against Spanish attacks. You could use this HAT as an activity to spiral back to thinking about historical evidence and get a sense of student learning. You could also build this into a broader assessment to gauge whether students have learned the skills and content taught in this lesson and determine whether students need further instruction in these areas.

Sources

Document A

Spielvogel, Jackson J., and Jay McTighe. 2018. *World history and geography*.

Document B

Sarmiento de Gamboa, Pedro, Clements R. Markham, and Baltasar de Ocampo. 1907. *History of the Incas*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate. Retrieved from <https://lccn.loc.gov/08004239>

Also consulted for translation comparison and adaptation: Sarmiento de Gamboa, Pedro, Brian S. Bauer, and Vania Smith-Oka. 2007. *The history of the Incas*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Document C

Guamán Poma de Ayala, Felipe. 1615. *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*. Retrieved from <https://lccn.loc.gov/2002399564>

Translation

Guamán Poma de Ayala, Felipe, and Roland Hamilton. 2009. *The first new chronicle and good government: on the history of the world and the Incas up to 1615*. Austin: University of Texas Press. <https://lccn.loc.gov/2009017511>

Document D

De la Vega, Garcilaso and H.V. Livermore. 1966. *Royal commentaries of the Incas, and general history of Peru*. Austin: University of Texas Press. Retrieved from <https://lccn.loc.gov/65013518>

Also consulted for translation comparison and adaptation: De la Vega, Garcilaso. 1688. *The royal commentaries of Peru, in two parts*. London: M. Flesher for J. Tonson. Retrieved from <https://lccn.loc.gov/03001664>