

Machu Picchu

Key Words

conquistador	Spanish conqueror
abandoned	left behind; given up completely
estate	a large area of land containing a home

The hidden city of Machu Picchu is an amazing ancient Inca ruin **carved** into the **steep** mountainside in the Andes **Mountains** of Peru in South America. The **ruins** of the city, dating back to the 1400s A.D., lie 7,875 feet above sea level between two steep peaks overlooking the Peruvian river valley below.

The Incas ruled the largest native empire in the Americas. At one time, their numbers topped 12 million, but all of that changed with the coming of the Spanish invasion in 1532. The Spanish **conquistadors'** **conquest** in the 16th century destroyed all of the Inca cities except Machu Picchu. Machu Picchu is so high up in the mountains that the **invaders** never found it.

For over 400 years, Machu Picchu remained **relatively** unchanged, in near perfect condition, until Hiram Bingham, an American **archeologist**, found it in 1911. It took many workmen four months to **clear** away the jungle covering that **camouflaged** the ancient, **abandoned** city. When the city was cleared, Bingham found that it covered three square miles. Bingham named the city for the mountain beside it. Machu Picchu means "Old Man Peak."

Machu Picchu probably served as a royal **estate**. Members of the royal family used it when away from the Inca capital city. The site had houses for servants, farmers, and weavers who worked for the royal family. The **granite** buildings had steep thatch roofs to **repel** the rain. Machu Picchu is noted for the architecture

of its 200 buildings. The Incas **erected** the buildings with huge, 10- to 15-ton, smoothly polished stones that fit perfectly together. They did all of this work by hand. The Incas had no machines, iron tools, or horses.

The Incas **adapted** well to the surrounding mountainous landforms. They cut hundreds of farming **terraces** into the nearby mountainside for growing crops. **Aqueducts** supplied water. A system of stairways ran through the city so people could get around easily. The architecture created the appearance of a city carved out of the mountainside.

Today, Machu Picchu is Peru's chief tourist attraction and one of the most famous archeological monuments in the world.



words read _____

- errors _____

= cold score

words read _____

- errors _____

= hot score

expression

goal _____

date passed

Machu Picchu

Comprehension Questions

Identifying the main idea

1. What is the main idea of the story?
 - a. Machu Picchu was once a royal estate.
 - b. Machu Picchu is an archeological masterpiece.
 - c. Machu Picchu was well hidden for 400 years.

Recalling a fact

2. How did Machu Picchu escape destruction by the Spanish conquistadors?
 - a. The jungle camouflaged it.
 - b. It was very high in the mountains.
 - c. The Incas erected walls around it.

Getting meaning from the context

3. What does **clear** mean in this story?
 - a. remove
 - b. leap over
 - c. make as profit

Making connections within the text

4. Why is Machu Picchu considered an archeological masterpiece?
 - a. It was camouflaged so well.
 - b. It was so high in the mountains.
 - c. It was so advanced with farming terraces and aqueducts.

Connecting the author's and the reader's ideas

5. Why did the Incas leave Machu Picchu?

Developing vocabulary

6. Read the pairs of sentences below. Fill in each blank with a bold-faced word from the story that means the same or nearly the same as the bold-faced word or words in the first sentence of each pair.
 - a. The Andes Mountains **rise sharply**.
They are _____ mountains.
 - b. The **victory** was complete.
The conquistadors' _____ ended the empire.
 - c. Years of plant growth **hid** Machu Picchu.
The jungle _____ the city.
 - d. Thatched roofs **keep out** rain.
These roofs _____ water.

Attending to details

7. a. Who lived in Machu Picchu?

- b. Who invaded the Inca Empire?

Processing information

8. a. What were the benefits of building Machu Picchu high in the mountains?

- b. What were likely problems building there?

Summarizing information

9. Write a summary statement about the following facts: The Incas adapted well to their surroundings. They developed advanced farming methods even building aqueducts to supply water. The Incas also had advanced architecture using huge stones that fit together perfectly.

Enrichment Activity

The Mayan society was also an advanced society in the early Americas. Why is it considered advanced?