

Machu Picchu

A Reading A-Z Level M Leveled Book
Word Count: 574

LEVELED BOOK • M

Machu Picchu

Connections

Writing and Art

Make a brochure about Machu Picchu.
Include five interesting facts on your poster.

Social Studies

Research to learn more about one of the buildings at Machu Picchu. Make a model of the building and list some facts about it.

Reading A-Z

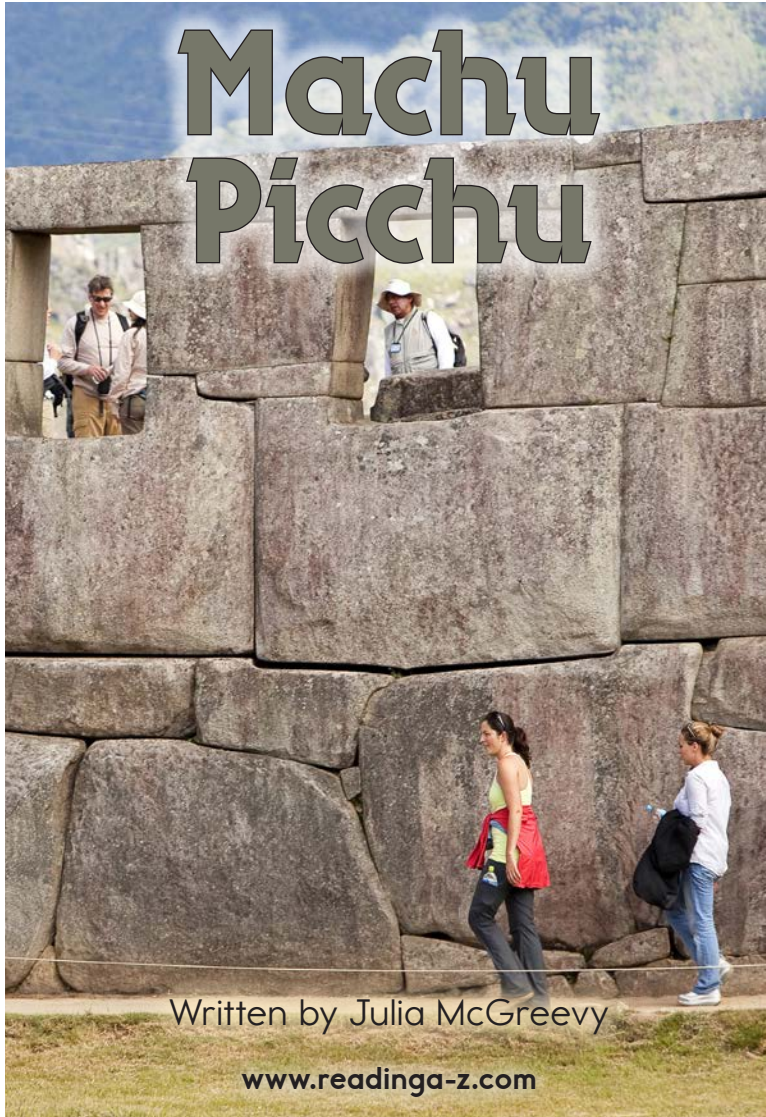
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Focus Question

What do people today know about Machu Picchu and the Inca people?

Words to Know

ancient
empire
explorer

Inca
ruin
spring

Title page: The number of visitors to Machu Picchu was more than one million for the first time in 2012. New rules limit the daily number of visitors.

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World Landmarks
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Correlation

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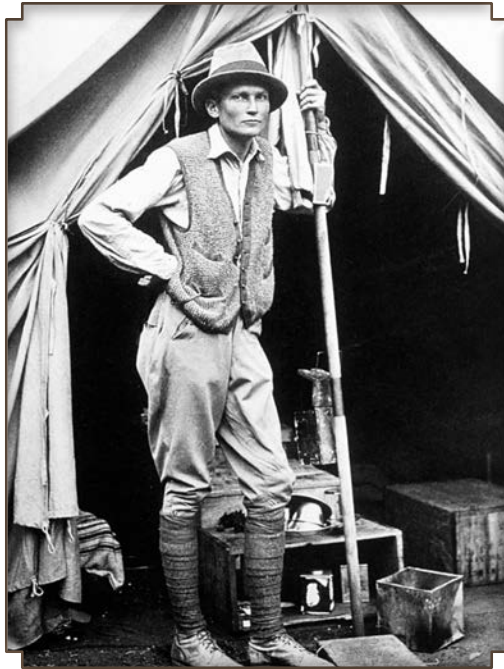


For many years, very few people knew about Machu Picchu.

The Hidden City

High in the Andes Mountains of Peru is an **ancient** city: Machu Picchu. No one has lived there for hundreds of years. The city was hidden by thick forests and nearly forgotten for a long time.

Then, in 1911, an American **explorer** named Hiram Bingham climbed up a long, steep path. When he reached the top, he was amazed at what he saw. There were ancient roads, stone walls, and buildings. Bingham knew this was an important city. He understood that Machu Picchu was an ancient treasure of the **Inca** people.



Hiram Bingham was born in Hawaii in 1875 and died in 1956 in Washington, D.C.



Today, objects such as this royal Inca clothing (left) and gold statue (below) are on display in museums.



The Inca People

It is not easy to learn about the Inca. Many experts think they had no written language. People learn what their lives were like by studying what they left behind.

Experts think the Inca first lived in the mountains of Peru. They became good at making buildings and roads. They also knew how to grow crops for food.



An Inca leader named Pachacuti (pah-chah-KOO-tee) ruled from 1438 to 1471. Experts think Machu Picchu may have been built for him. Under his leadership, the **empire** stretched through what are now the countries of Ecuador and Peru.

The Inca Empire grew as the Inca won battles with nearby enemies. Over time it grew to include about twelve million people. Cuba, Greece, and many other countries today have fewer people!



Inca warriors threw bola stones at enemies to trip and catch them.

Building Machu Picchu

Why did the Inca build Machu Picchu so high in the mountains? Experts think it may have been so they could observe people moving below in the valley. Yet people below could not see that there was a city on top! Even if they had, the location would have been easy to defend.



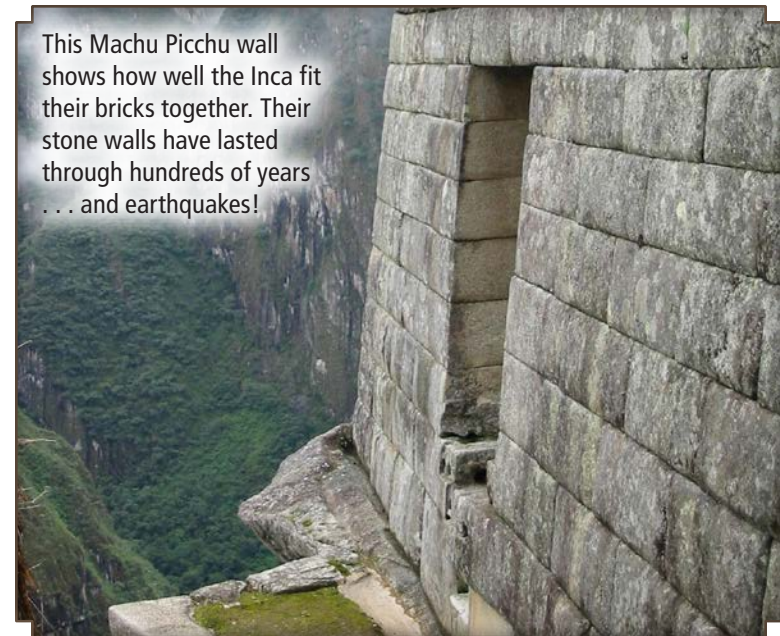
Machu Picchu is so high that clouds often pay a visit. In the Inca language, *machu* means "old," and *picchu* means "peak."

A rain-fed **spring** feeds the area. The Inca built a canal that carried this water to fountains. Machu Picchu was also close to an area with lots of rocks. This meant that workers did not have to carry heavy rocks a great distance.



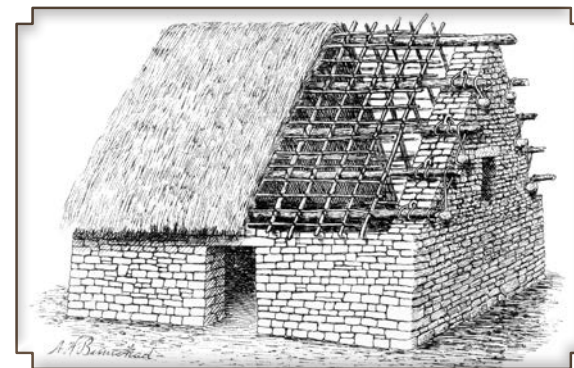
A spring still feeds the fountains at Machu Picchu.

It's still a mystery how the Inca carved the rocks into such perfect bricks. However they did it, experts think it may have taken them many months to complete one wall.



This Machu Picchu wall shows how well the Inca fit their bricks together. Their stone walls have lasted through hundreds of years . . . and earthquakes!

The Inca fit those stones together without using anything to hold them in place. The stones fit very well, too. If you tried to slip a knife between them today, you could not.



According to Bingham, the roof of a house may have been built like this drawing.

The city was divided into two parts. One part was houses and temples, such as the Temple of the Sun. On the first day of winter, sunlight enters a window and shines on a large rock in the middle of the room. Another temple is the Temple of the Three Windows, which also has three walls.



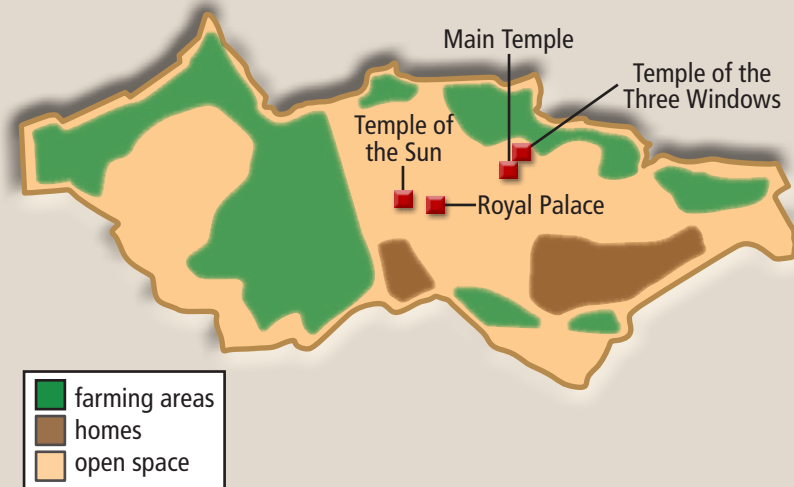
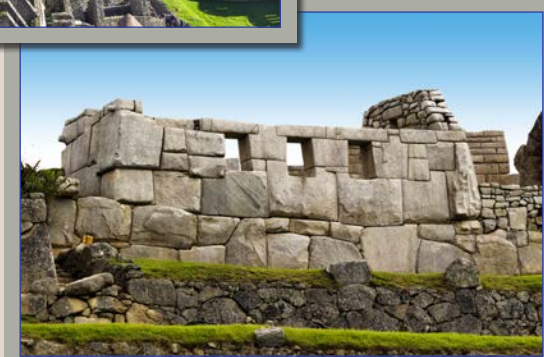
Sunlight shines through a special window into the Temple of the Sun. At Machu Picchu, the first day of winter is in late June.

Machu Picchu Features



Royal Palace

Temple of the Three Windows

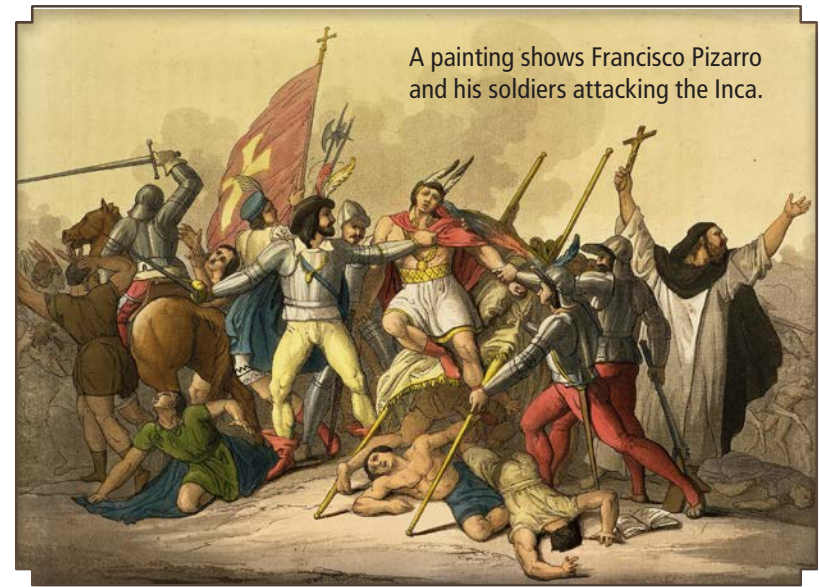


A total of about 150 homes were built at Machu Picchu. The Royal Palace and home of the Inca emperor was perhaps the grandest.

The other part of the city was for growing crops. Here, the Inca built layered gardens on the side of the mountain. They grew crops such as beans, potatoes, and tomatoes.



How did the Inca farm on steep hillsides? They built short stone walls that held strips of soil in place.



The Spanish Arrive

In the 1500s, explorers from Europe came to South America. They brought illness with them that spread and killed some Inca people.

In 1532, a Spanish explorer named Pizarro wanted to take control of the Inca empire. His soldiers killed many Inca people and their leader. Not long after the Spanish came, the Inca left Machu Picchu. The city fell into **ruin**.

Machu Picchu Now

Although it's hard to reach, people like to visit Machu Picchu. Once they see the beautiful city, they know their trip was worth it.

Today, people work to protect Machu Picchu. They know that this place can teach us about the Inca and their way of life.



Some people hike for three or four days to reach Machu Picchu. Other people take a train to get there.

Glossary

ancient (*adj.*)

from a very long time ago
(p. 4)

empire (*n.*)

a collection of nations
or people ruled by one
person or government
(p. 7)

explorer (*n.*)

a person who visits and
learns about new places
(p. 5)

Inca (*n.*)

a people and empire
present in the Andes
Mountains of South
America until the Spanish
came in the 1500s (p. 5)

ruin (*n.*)

the state of being destroyed
or broken down (p. 14)

spring (*n.*)

a place where water
comes up from
underground (p. 9)