

Danza Azteca Splendor!

Calmecac Indigenous Organization

Grades: K-12

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Experience the world of Ancient Mexico in this multi-disciplinary performance of traditional Aztec dancing, a form of dance that has been done in private rather than public for nearly 40 years in the United States. Audience members will learn about Aztec history, philosophy, language, culture and foods that deliver a new way of looking at the world through Indigenous eyes. These concepts are expressed within the symbolism of movements, storytelling, drumming and songs. The dances represent the elements of nature, the universal four directions of the earth and our connected human existence through the “circle” concept where wisdom, harmony and culture meet with respect and equality. Audience’s senses are delighted with colorful feathered headpieces, the sounds of conch shells and shaking rattles, combined with the deep sound of the drums and high pitched ocarina flutes. These dances are based on the Pre-Columbian traditions of the Nahuatl-speaking Teotihuacanos/ Mexi’ca, and other indigenous nations of central Mexico, including the Otomi/Chichimeca nations of Queretaro.

TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) & National Dance Standards (K-5)

Grade	Dance	ELA	Soc. Studies	The Students Will:
K	Std.11	K.14	K.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop knowledge and skills of dance elements, choreographic processes, and forms in a variety of dance genres and styles. Demonstrate an understanding of societal, cultural, historical, and artistic diversity as communicated through dance. Write stories to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Understand the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to society.
1	Std.11	1.18	1.15	
2	Std.11	2.18	2.16	
3	Std.11	3.18	3.13	
4	Std.11	4.16	4.19	
5	Std.11	5.16	5.22	
MS	1.2, 1.4	6.15	6.18	
	2.2, 2.4	7.15	7.19	
	3.2, 3.4	8.15	8.23	
HS	I.2, I.4	9.14	WGS.17	
	II.2, II.4	10.14	WHS.23	
	III.2, III.4	11.14	USH.26	
	IV.2, IV.4	I 2.14		

STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness):

Subject	Grade Level	Reporting Category	The Students Will:
Writing	Grades 4 & 7	Reporting Category 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compose a variety of written texts with a clear central idea, coherent organization, sufficient development, and effective use of language and conventions. Demonstrate an understanding of geographic and cultural influences on historical issues and events.
	English I, II, III	Reporting Category 4	
Soc. Std.	Grade 8	Reporting Category 2	
	US History	Reporting Category 2	
	World Geography	Reporting Category 3	
	World History	Reporting Category 3	



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ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Word	Definition
Ancestor	A person from whom one is descended and who lived several generations ago.
Archeology	A scientist specializing in archaeology, the study of past cultures. Archaeologists often dig up the physical remains of ancient peoples, such as their houses, tools, pottery, and art work.
Aztecs	The Aztecs are a tribe, according to their own legends, from Aztlan somewhere in the north of modern Mexico. From this place, which they left in about the 12th century AD, there derives the name Aztecs. The Aztecs are members of the Nahuatl people who established an empire in Mexico that was overthrown by Cortes in 1519.
Chinampas	The Floating Gardens - The Aztecs dug canals out of the swampy land of Lake Texcoco in the Valley of Mexico and then used the mud dredged up from the bottom of the lake to cover rafts made of reeds and branches. Over the years, layers upon layers of mud were added until finally, with the help of roots from the willow trees, the islands became stationary. The Aztecs used the chinampas to grow food and other crops.
Civilization	A nation or group of people who are civilized; a stage in the evolution of human culture, generally marked by agriculture, towns, social organization, trade, writing, and a high development of art and science.
Codex (Codices)	Today we know a lot about the Aztecs because they wrote about themselves in books, called codices. A codex was filled with illustrations, as well as with picture symbols, that are a form of writing. The Aztecs used pictures which they used as an alphabet. They had hundreds of symbols to use in their writing. Nouns were easy to draw - they drew a cat as a cat and drew a fish as a fish and so on. The nouns were joined together to make sentences. They used the symbols to write down stories and keep records. Newer codices, written after the Spanish colonists came to Mexico, contain descriptions of typical Aztec life as well as traditional stories about their ancestors and their gods. These stories are called myths or legends.
Culture	The beliefs, customs, arts, and traditions of a particular society, group, place, or time.
Dance	Rhythmic movement to music.
Empire	A vast territory all under the control of one ruler or central government. A multi-ethnic or multinational state with political and/or military control of populations who are culturally and ethnically distinct from the ruling ethnic group and its culture; kingdom.
Hieroglyphic Writing	Picture writing -- Writing using pictures to represent ideas or objects.
Indigenous	The people and things that have been in a region from the earliest time.
Lake Texcoco	The Aztecs built their capital, Tenochtitlan, on an island in this lake in the Valley of Mexico. Originally, Lake Texcoco was quite large, but it was dried out and filled in over the years by the development of Mexico City, which lies over the ancient lake bed.
Legend	Something that is well known for a long period of time; a traditional story, a myth. In Mesoamerica, legends contained the beliefs of the people regarding their origins, history, and gods.
Movement	Expression through action.
Movement Patterns	Repeated gestures or steps.
Nahuatl	the language of the Aztec empire and was used as a lingua franca in much of Mesoamerica from the 7th century AD until the Spanish conquest in the 16th century.
Pictograph	A picture representing a word, phrase, or idea, especially one used in early writing systems.
Symbolism	The use of material objects to express or represent ideas or qualities. A picture that is used instead of a word or group of words to represent ideas or objects.
Teotihuacan	A great, pre-Aztec city of ancient Mexico known for its huge pyramids. The name Teotihuacan comes from the Aztec language, and means "The Home of the Gods." The people who built this city controlled the Valley of Mexico from about 200 to 700 A.D. It later became the capital of the Aztecs.
Valley of Mexico	A broad basin surrounded by mountains in the central highlands of southern Mexico where Mexico City is now situated. The Valley of Mexico was one of the principal centers of ancient civilization in Mexico.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Before the performance:

- Carry out Web research to find out about the ancient Aztecs. Make a class chart about your findings. Who were the Aztecs? Where and when did they live? What was their culture like? What were their major religious beliefs? What was their capital city like? What happened to them?
- Discuss the kinds of dances that you already know. What cultures are these dances from? How do people use their feet, hands, head, and body in these dances? What music accompanies these dances?

After the performance:

- Write a thank-you letter to the performers.
- Research and practice phrases in Nahuatl, the native language of the Aztec people
- Draw pictures and/or write poetry to express the experience of the performance.

Language Arts:

- Think about your favorite parts of the performance and write a thank you letter to the Aztec Dancers sharing your feelings and impressions about what you saw. Use correct friendly letter format. You may also draw a picture on your letter related to the performance. Send your letters to Young Audiences of Houston.
- The Aztecs' books were called "Codices" and they were made of long strips of paper that folded like an accordion, with a piece of wood at each end that created a cover. The Aztecs wrote using pictures to represent events, items, or sounds. Make an Aztec Codex by writing a story, myth, or legend using only simple pictures (pictographs). Share your Codex by showing and reading it to your classmates.
- The Aztecs' dances described an event from the past or recreated scenes about their gods. Create a dance to tell your story or an event from your past.
- Write a review of the performance of the Aztec Dancers of Leverage Dance Theatre. Like a critic who writes for a newspaper, your job is to critique the performance for the public. Include important elements of reviews, such as the name of the theater and performance, your opinions about the choreography and dancing, and your opinions about other artistic elements such as music, costumes, lighting and scenery.
- Use the writing process and your imagination to write an experience story entitled "My Day with the Aztec Indians." Read your story to the class.
- Consult a map to take an imaginary cross-country road trip through Mexico. Create a travel journal to keep track of the towns and cities you go through, the major highways you travel, the rivers and mountains you cross on your journey. Write about your experiences and all you have learned while visiting your destination. Include sketches, drawings, and pictures. Design a creative cover for your journal. In a small group, share your travel journal.
- Create similes and metaphors to describe the sights and sounds of the Aztec Dance performance to someone who hasn't seen it. Turn your figurative language into a poem. Think about the following:
 - What did the dance look like?
 - What did the stage set look like?
 - What did the costumes look like?
 - What did the lighting look like?
 - What did the music sound like?
 - What kind(s) of movement did the performers use?
- Retell stories and other reading selections through dance. Use movement to act out characters and plot in a story.

- Use dance to express important concepts in language arts, such as ending punctuation.
- After reading a story, break into three groups and summarize the story. One group summarizes the beginning; one group summarizes the middle; one group summarizes the end of the story. In your group, one person will be the narrator and will read each sentence to the class. The other group members will create movements that clearly show the meaning of the sentences. Perform the summarized dance story from beginning to end.
- Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the gods of Aztec mythology with the gods of Greek and Roman mythology.
- Google the Aztec legend about the Eagle, the Snake and the Prickly Pear Cactus. Read about this symbol on the Mexican flag and draw a picture of the Mexican flag. Hang your flag in your classroom.

Math:

- Look at images of Aztec rugs to see their symmetry, geometry, and patterns. Notice the shape sequences and repeating patterns of both shapes and colors made up of triangles or squares in a variety of arrangements. Collect a selection of wide strips of colored paper and cut out lots of small triangles and squares in a range of five different colors to be glued down. Create 3 of your own individual strips of patterns and then arrange them together to create one spectacular design. Arrange your strips side by side on the floor with all of the strips that other students in your class have created to make one large, vibrant Aztec patterned rug!
- The Aztec number system was a base 20 system, which means our 10 is like there 20. The Aztecs used dots and glyphs (pictures) to count. A series of dots represented the first nine numbers. In Aztec arithmetic, a dot equaled 1, a bar or 5 dots represented 5, a diamond represented 10, a flag represented 20. Different feathers stood for 100's, and a bag of cacao beans represented 8000. The Aztec number system was additive—the symbols were added together to produce the desired number. The number zero (0) was not used. Write a word problem without words! Use dots and pictures to write the problem. Solve each other's problems.
- Create a skit that incorporates drumming and dance movements to act out the parts of a word problem and its solution.
- Create a pattern – AB or ABA, etc. Use sticks or some other item such as pencils or rulers to beat the pattern and keep it going. Make up your own drumming rhythms and patterns.
- Dance the Equation! - "X" = 5 possible movements.
 - For example, the five movements could be slide, turn, reach, squat, and jump. These are your five possibilities for "X".
 - Demonstrate the equation, $2X + 3 = 13$.
 - "X" equals the 5 movements, so you perform all five of the movements in any order, two times, then create 3 completely new movements.
 - Therefore, "X" = 5, and the equation as demonstrated is $2X + 3 = 13$
- Use dance and movement to create geometric shapes: circles, arcs, line segments, diamonds, parallel lines, right angles, etc.
- Predict and then measure how many steps, tiptoes, leaps it will take to cross a room. Discuss non-standard units of measure exemplified by different people's leaps.

Social Studies:

- Make a cultural map of your classroom. Where do members of your class come from? What are the linguistic, musical and dance traditions in all of these countries and regions. Create a class Heritage Album. Compile pictures and information about the heritage of all class members, including significant historical people from different cultures. Feature drawings, invented memorabilia, and simulated newspaper clippings. Display your Heritage Album in your classroom or in your school library.
- In small groups, discuss the idea of how cultural differences exist in the world and how similarities among people go beyond culture.
- Create a timeline and chart showing the rise and fall of the Aztec empire during the 14th to 16th centuries.
- Life for the typical person living in the Aztec Empire was hard work. As in many ancient societies, the rich were able to live luxurious lives, but the common people had to work very hard. Google the Daily Life of the ancient Aztecs and create a PowerPoint that includes pictures and information about the following areas. Present your project to your class.
 - Family Life
 - Types of Homes
 - Clothes
 - Foods
 - Schools
 - Marriage
 - Games
 - Interesting Facts
- The Aztec Empire was made up of city-states. At the center of each city-state was a large city that ruled the area. For the most part, the Aztec Emperor did not interfere with the ruling of the city-states. What he required was that each city-state paid him a tribute. As long as the tribute was paid, the city-state remained somewhat independent of Aztec rule. Find out information about the following Aztec Emperors and present a report to your class:
 - Acamapichtli
 - Itzcoatl
 - Montezuma I
 - Montezuma II
- Time Travel – Travel through time and space to the ancient city of Tenochtitlan, the fabulous Aztec capital. The Aztec capital was one of the five largest cities in the entire world and was incredibly beautiful and well-organized. Read about Tenochtitlan on the web. Write a postcard to your friend or family member describing where you are and telling them what you have learned.
- Work with a partner to Google the contributions of the Aztec Indian to present day Mexican culture. Make a diorama of a scene in Aztec life.
- In small groups, choreograph a dance to recreate important events in history.
- Present this week's current events to the class through a rap while drumming the beat.
- Corn (maize) was a staple in the Aztec culture. The Aztecs needed good farming practices to support their large population. The Aztecs devised irrigation systems, built terraces on nearby hillsides, and used fertilizers to increase usage of the soil. The Aztecs planted corn and other crops in the irrigated fields around Lake Texcoco and used floating gardens known as chinampas. Show the Aztec's sophisticated corn-growing techniques in a poster or in a realistic shoebox diorama.
- Archeologists have learned many things about the Aztecs from the artwork found in the ruins of their cities. It tells about their gods and religious ceremonies. The gods are shown in stone and carved

sculptures on the walls of the temples. On the inside walls of the temples are what is left of bright colored paintings showing ceremonial rituals. Create a PowerPoint about the Aztec culture, including religion, art, music, dance, dress, food, drink, sports/games. Share your project.

- In small groups, discuss the following topic: How does dance reflect the belief and culture of a people? Make a group mural or collage to represent your ideas. Hang your work in your classroom.
- One of the indications of social organization in a civilized society is the presence of different social classes and occupations. Describe the different social classes and occupations that existed in the Aztec civilization. Create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting the social organization of the Aztecs to the social organization of the Americans.
- What happened to the Aztecs? What happens when cultures are invaded by other cultures? In small groups, discuss the causes of the Aztec civilization's downfall.
- Put the Aztecs on the map! On the world map, find the country of Mexico. Locate Mexico City, the country's capital. Mexico City is built on the site of the old Aztec capital. Discuss what you see on the map.
- The Aztecs developed many rituals to honor the souls of the dead who stayed behind to watch over loved ones. Many of these rituals, such as leaving food for a dead relative, burning incense, and making an ofrenda/offering, are still a part of Day of the Dead today. Create a poster with images of the Day of the Dead and share with your class. Hang your poster in your classroom.

Science:

- Explore the different habitats in Mexico. Make a poster with illustrations of the habitats and display the poster in your classroom. Invent a board adventure game to review the habitats and ecosystems that can be found in Mexico. Play your game with a partner.
- Make an Aztec menu. The Aztec's main food source was a type of corn called maize. They also ate tomatoes, avocados, tortillas made from maize and atole which was a form of porridge. Tamales were prepared from steamed maize that was stuffed with vegetables or meat. Fishermen made nets from fibers of the maguay cactus and used these nets to catch fish, turtles, ducks, and frogs. In the Aztec culture chocolate was for warriors and the nobility. Create an Aztec menu with various dishes using the foods described above. Think of catchy titles for your menu items. Decorate the menu and share in small groups.
- The Sun was one of the most important aspects of Aztec religion and they called themselves the "People of the Sun". They felt that in order for the sun to rise each day the Aztecs needed to perform rituals and sacrifices to give the sun strength. Make an illustrated fact mini-book about the Sun and share it with your class.
- Read about the Mexican holiday Dia de los Muertos, Day of the Dead, and look at images of the skeletons used in this celebration. Read about the importance of having bones and identify the different bones that you have in your body. Create a skeleton mobile and hang it in your classroom.

RESOURCES

<i>Related Websites</i>
https://danzaazteca.wordpress.com/2009/05/29/why-did-aztecs-dance/ http://www.history.com/topics/aztecs http://www.history.com/topics/aztecs/videos/the-aztecs http://www.mexicolore.co.uk/aztecs/music/music-song-and-dance-among-the-aztecs-a-short-introduction http://aztec.com/index.html http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=aa12 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec http://nationalgeographic.org/education/mapping/outline-map/?map=Mexico http://web.archive.org/web/20110423033014/http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/CIVAMRCA/AZTECS.HTM http://web.archive.org/web/20071101005308/http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/refpages/refarticle.aspx?refid=761593151 http://science.howstuffworks.com/innovation/inventions/5-ancient-aztec-inventions.htm http://www.aztec-history.com/aztec-inventions.html http://www.ducksters.com/history/aztec_maya_inca.php http://mexicolore.co.uk/aztecs/aztec-life/ http://www.cis.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1994/3/94.03.03.x.html http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/subjects/aztecs https://www.azteccalendar.com/ http://aztecs.mrdonn.org/place.html http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/thehistoryofmexico/p/09mexicoflag.htm http://youngzones.org/ElaineTAMUCC/FMN/Aztec_number.html http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2008/04/how-aztecs-did-math
<i>Smartboard Links</i>
http://exchange.smarttech.com/search.html?q=%22aztecs%22 http://exchange.smarttech.com/details.html?id=cfac3fe9-a404-4c4c-b6bf-6e3511f43774&from=reg

ABOUT THE ARTIST / ENSEMBLE:

Calmeacac Tonantzin Yolilitzyotl (Houston Aztec Dance & Drum), was originally founded in 2014 by Rainflowa (Kiawitl Xochitl) and her three children, as an open community traditional Aztec dance circle and cultural performing arts group in Houston, Texas. It is an open community dance circle dedicated to preserving and sharing traditional Indigenous Mexica philosophy, history, customs, dancing, drumming, culture and arts to communities in Houston, Texas. Currently, there are over 30 group members in the dance circle, in addition to new beginner students that attend weekly classes. The group's founder also has a history of collaborating with other Texas based Aztec dancers and dance groups whether participating in traditional ceremonies or inviting and connecting other dancers to different ceremonies and performances throughout the greater Houston area and around Texas, California and Mexico since 2002. Their work, quotes and experiences have been expressed in academic thesis and dissertations in anthropology, native history, political science, cultural diversity, sociology and Chicanos in cultural resistance in the 21st century and in educational/artistic performances in cultural events.