

Unit I: The Ancient Americas

A survey of the major arts and architecture of the pre-Columbian world, this unit introduces Mesoamerican and Andean cultures from the earliest known civilizations to the time of European contact and conquest. The unit proceeds chronologically within each region, setting out “mother cultures,” the Olmec and the Chavín, then traces the continuation of artistic, ritual, social, and cultural practices in later civilizations. Seeking to debunk popular myths, from the Mayan apocalypse to the Nazca lines, the unit explores the richness of the pre-Hispanic tradition through study of such topics as the colossal Olmec heads, the monumental pyramids at Teotihuacán, and Inca stonework at Machu Picchu.

Unit I Time Advisory

This unit should take you approximately 26.5 hours to complete.

- Subunit I.1: 2 hours
- Subunit I.2: 13 hours
- Subunit I.2.1: 2 hours
- Subunit I.2.2: 1 hour
- Subunit I.2.3: 4 hours
- Subunit I.2.3.1: 3.5 hours
- Subunit I.2.3.2: 1 hour
- Subunit I.2.4: 1.5 hours
- Subunit I.3: 11.5 hours
- Subunit I.3.1: 2.5 hours
- Subunit I.3.2: 1.5 hours
- Subunit I.3.3: 2.5 hours
- Subunit I.3.4: 5 hours

Unit I Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the student will be able to:

- Trace the general evolution of ancient Mesoamerican and Andean art over approximately three millennia.
- Discuss representative examples of pre-Columbian art in terms of style and theme.
- Distinguish similarities and differences between the visual cultures of Mesoamerica and the Andes.
- Explain the relationship between pre-Columbian artworks and the broader social, religious, economic, and political contexts in which they functioned.
- Relate artistic practices seen in later civilizations back to prior precedents and compare later interpretations of common subjects and themes.