

## Mexico: Chichen Itza World Schooling Lesson Guide

### Q 1) Where is Chichen Itza located?

- A) In the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, in the state of Quintana Roo west of the city of Tulum.

### Q 2) What does Chichen Itza translate to in English?

- A) Mouth of the well. The Yucatan has such porous geography there are no above ground rivers in the Peninsula, therefore any civilization required nearby water sources to survive. Chichen Itza has four sinkholes located throughout the city making it an ideal place for settlement. In 2015, it was discovered through SONAR and RADAR technology, a cenote is located underneath the main temple of Kukulcan though no one in present day has ever seen it with their own eyes. This makes the translation of Chichen Itza that much more telling.

### Q 3) How large was the city of Chichen Itza?

- A) Chichen Itza was one of the larger Mayan cities, housing approximately 15,000 people. It was not the largest in this region, however, as that distinction goes to Coba.

### Q 4) When was the height of civilization at Chichen Itza?

- A) There has recently been differing opinions as to when Chichen Itza was first built. Wide consensus dictates 600 BC though it could have been as long as 400 years earlier. The city thrived for 1500 years and was eventually abandoned by the year 1250 AD.

### Q 5) What is the main temple at Chichen Itza?

- A) Mayan culture was heavily dominated by three symbols. The bird, which represented heaven; the snake which represented earth and the jaguar which represented the afterlife. The dominant symbol at Chichen Itza is the serpent, and the main temple of Chichen Itza is named the Kukulcan Pyramid, after the God of the Feathered Serpent, or Quetzalcoatl. Kukulcan may also possibly be named after the 10th century priest who survived a 60 foot fall into the sacrificial pit to be revered as a King thereafter.

### Q 6) What makes Kukulcan so remarkable?

- A) The pyramid matches uniformly with the sacred numbers of the Mayan belief system. The Mayans operated by four different cycles, each represented uniquely in their culture. In congruence, Kukulcan was built with four different staircases. Each staircase is

comprised of 91 steps. The total combined steps of the Kukulcan Pyramid totals 364 with the final step leading to the inner chamber itself that makes up, 365, the number of days in the calendar year.

Inside Kukulcan are inner pyramids that also adhere to these strict mathematical equations.

**Q 7) What is a Mayan ball court and what was it used for?**

A) Nearly every Mayan city had a ball court that varied in size and dimensions, but was used for the same purpose - to play the game Pok-ta-Pok. It is believed this game resembled a mix between soccer and basketball to a degree. The aim of the game was to get a rubber ball into a hoop without the use of hands or feet.

The ball court at Chichen Itza was one of the largest and played a significant role in the culture of Mayan civilization. Losers had to pick one team member to be sacrificed by ritual at the end of the game, and their head was put on display at the nearby wall of skulls.

**Q 8) Why was Chichen Itza given a distinction of being one of the world wonders?**

A) Chichen Itza leaves behind a complex understanding of the Earth's role in the Universe. The Mayans were the first to develop the calendar including an understanding of how the Earth rotated around the sun. They understood the equinoxes and built their pyramids to mark these important distinctive dates as they related to the sky and stars, as well as agriculture. Each temple throughout Mayan civilization catches the light of the sun on the equinox and directs it to shine on the nearest temple casting a unbroken path. They could even predict eclipses and the main temple at Chichen Itza houses a sophisticated observatory.