

e-Edition Plus

A current events feature for teaching with electronic editions.

By Sara Shahriari

Peru gears up to celebrate Machu Picchu discovery

This summer, the South American country of Peru will celebrate one of the most amazing discoveries ever made involving ancient civilizations.

On July 24, Peru will mark the 100th anniversary of the discovery of the mountain city of Machu Picchu by modern explorers.

Parades, parties, concerts and festivals are being planned for the celebration, which will attract visitors from all over the world.

The stone city of Machu Picchu (MAH-chew PEA-chew) is located high in the Andes Mountains in Peru. Its name means "old mountain" in the Quechua language spoken by the native Inca people who built the city.

The Inca used huge stones to create houses, storage areas and temples. The stones are so carefully cut that you cannot see a single crack between them, even though the Inca used no mortar or cement to hold them together.

To support the city, the Inca also built hundreds of terraces on the steep mountainside so they could grow food in flat, level gardens.

The Inca empire was large, and stretched over parts of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile and Colombia in South America. It was at its strongest almost 600 years ago, around the year 1450 CE, when Machu Picchu was built.

Many experts think Machu Picchu was a palace of the Inca Emperor Pachacuti.

Machu Picchu was used for only 100 years. In the early 1500s people from Spain, called conquistadors, arrived at the borders of the Inca Empire to claim the land for that European country.

Many Inca died fighting with the Spaniards, or became sick and died of

smallpox, a disease the conquistadors brought from Europe.

Lost, then found

Machu Picchu was abandoned by the Inca and never discovered by the Spanish, who came to control most of South America.

Forgotten by the world, except for the few Peruvian families who lived near the ruins, the city became covered by forest and vegetation.

Then, in 1911, an explorer and historian named Hiram Bingham from Yale University in the United States was working in Peru. He heard about a large, abandoned stone city in the mountains and set off to find it.

With directions from local people,

he reached Machu Picchu and told the world about the stone city of the Inca. Eventually, Machu Picchu became Peru's biggest tourist attraction.

Issues to solve

Today about 800,000 people from around the world visit Machu Picchu each year. This tourism is good for Peru's economy, because many people find work in hotels and restaurants, and as tour guides for visitors.

But some people worry that too many tourists are now visiting Machu Picchu and that by walking around the ruins they are damaging them.

Another issue to be resolved is what to do about the artifacts Bingham sent back to Yale.

The artifacts are on display at Yale, but the Peruvian government believes that they belong in Peru and wants them back. In November of 2007, Yale agreed to return the majority of the artifacts to Peru.

Photo by Sara Shahriari



When discovered by Hiram Bingham in 1911, the stone city of Machu Picchu was hidden by vegetation high in the Andes Mountains.

Talk About the News

- After discovering Machu Picchu in 1911, Hiram Bingham took many pieces of pottery, bone and stone from Peru to the museum at Yale University. At the time, Peru was not actively caring for the ruined city. Now Peru dedicates a lot of time and money to the site and wants the artifacts back. As a class, discuss whether you think Yale should return all or some of the artifacts to Peru. Talk about how attitudes about ruins and artifacts have changed in the last 100 years.

Learning Standards: Engaging peers in constructive conversations about topics of interest or importance; exploring and reflecting on universal themes and substantive issues from written, visual and electronic texts.

Explore Your e-Edition

- There are many good things about tourism at Machu Picchu, and some not-so-good things. Find a story in the e-Edition about tourism in the United States or another country. Read the story and write a one-paragraph summary of it. Then make a list of three positive things and three negative things about how tourism affects the community in the story.

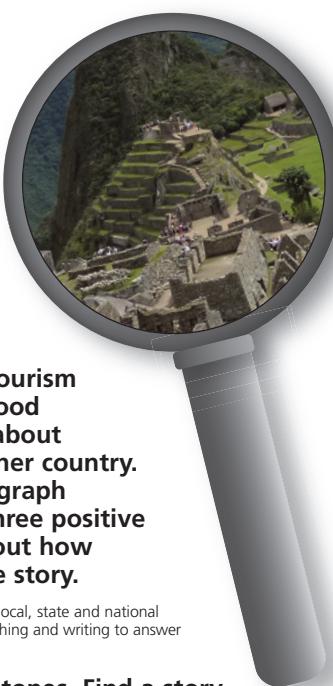
Learning Standards: Tracing the origins of a public issue; posing local, state and national policy issues as questions; posing social science questions; researching and writing to answer the questions.

- Machu Picchu was built using huge stones. Find a story in the e-Edition about a construction project in your state or community. Make a list of the materials being used in the project. Then write a paragraph on the materials you would use in the project if you could choose, and why. If you want, also draw a picture of the building.

Learning Standard: Reading and writing with developing fluency, speaking confidently, listening and interacting appropriately, viewing strategically and representing creatively.

- The amazing buildings of Machu Picchu are now seen as evidence of how advanced Inca society was. Buildings today also reflect the values of communities and society. Find a photo of a building in the e-Edition. Write a paragraph describing what you think the building "says" about its community.

Learning Standards: Responding to visual, written and electronic texts; developing critical standards for personal use; writing fluently for multiple purposes.



How Well Did You Read?

Understanding what you read is a skill that will help you all your life. Review the story about Machu Picchu by answering the questions below.

- How long ago was Machu Picchu built?
 - About 1,000 years ago
 - About 100 years ago
 - About 6,000 years ago
 - About 600 years ago
- In what country is Machu Picchu located?
 - Ecuador
 - Peru
 - Bolivia
 - Argentina
- Of what material is Machu Picchu made?
 - Stone
 - Bricks
 - Mortar
 - Cement
- What disease did the Spanish bring that killed many Inca?
 - Measles
 - Fever
 - Plague
 - Smallpox
- How many people visit Machu Picchu each year?
 - 800
 - 8,000
 - 80,000
 - 800,000

ANSWERS: 1-D, 2-B, 3-A, 4-D, 5-D.