

CATEGORY: PERU: INCA EMPIRE

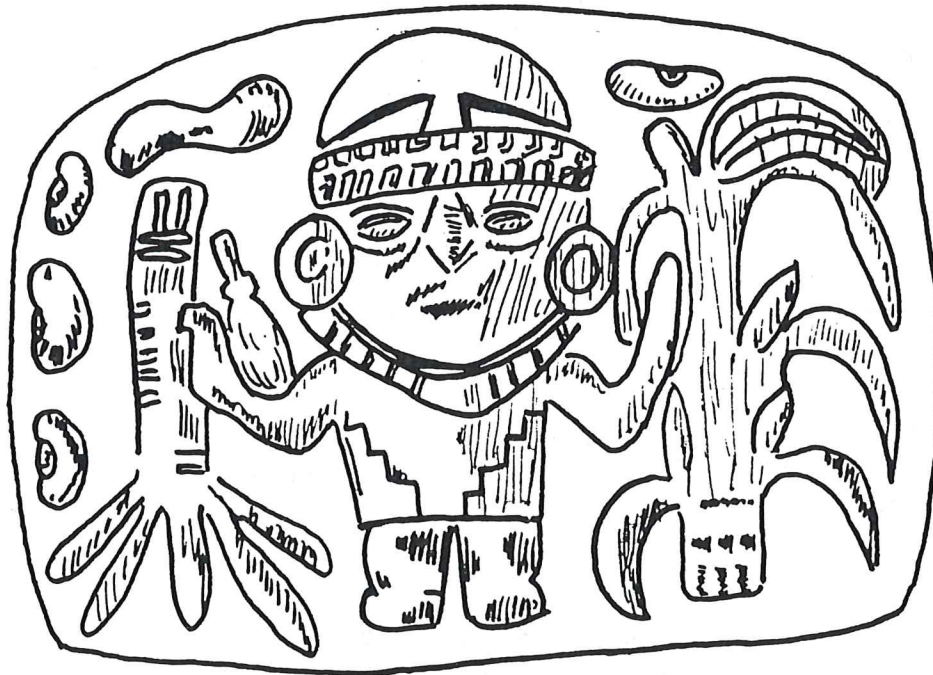
CONCEPTS: FOLKLORE, religion

ACTIVITY: READING THE INCA CREATION MYTH. In the Brazilian section of this collection there is a Gê Indian creation myth. These two creation myths together can lead to an interesting discussion.

OBJECTIVES: Students will learn how the Inca's believed the world was created and be able to compare this with other creation myths.

MATERIALS: Copies of the Inca Creation Myth  
(Copies of the Gê Creation Myth: See Brazil)

PROCEDURE: Follow the procedure set forth under Gê Creation Myth: Brazil.



**LEVEL: MIDDLE GRADES**

**Source:** Gibbs, Virginia G. *Latin America: Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades*. Center for Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1985. 1989.

## The Inca Creation Myth

It is thought that each Peruvian indigenous group had its own traditional creation myth differing in detail and essence. The Inca creation myth is the only one that has been conserved in its entirety. Each individual narrator tells a slightly different version of the story but the most famous is the following.

Viracocha, the Creator, made a dark world without sunlight. First, he created a population of giants by sculpturing huge stone figures and breathing life into them. Viracocha soon discovered that many of the giants were unhappy with their lives so he turned some back into stone and drowned the rest, except for two, in a great flood.

Before creating anything else he commanded the sun and the moon to leave the island of Titicaca and take their places in the sky.

Now, with both sunlight and moonlight in Tiahuanaco, he made clay figures of all the animals and people in the world. He dressed the people in their traditional costumes and gave them life. Viracocha taught the people their diverse languages, customs, ceremonies and songs. Then he sent them underground so that they could emerge in the places that would be their homes on earth.

Then one day, Viracocha and his helpers traveled north to see the results of his creation. He personally traveled the length of the mountain range; a helper, the coast, and another, the border of the western jungle. Few people recognized Viracocha because he was disguised as an old man. In some places they stoned him (an almost universal way of treating nearly all foreigners and enemies in those days.) Finally, in Casha (a province of Canas) Viracocha became so offended by the reception the people gave him, that he caused a mountain of burning rock to set the countryside on fire. The terrorized citizens begged forgiveness and he put the fires out with a wave of his cane. Afterwards, the inhabitants built a sanctuary on the mountain, where many years later the Incas constructed a huge temple.

The creator went on to Urcos, a village close to Cuzco. There, he ordered a population to emerge from a mountain and in that spot they later built a sanctuary dedicated to him.

He visited Cuzco and continued north to Ecuador to the province of Costera de Manta. Then one day he said goodbye to a small village and walking on the waves disappeared to the other side of the ocean.



CATEGORY: PERU: INCA EMPIRE

CONCEPTS: RELIGION, Folklore

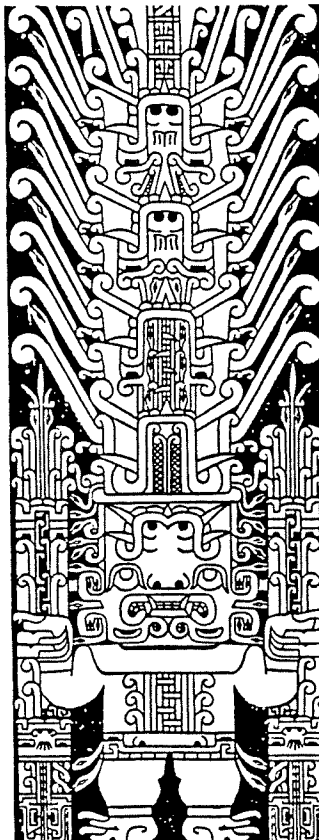
ACTIVITY: A PRAYER TO VIRACOCCHA. This ancient Inca prayer shows how, though religions and cultures differ, there are a series of beliefs and desires that often cross cultural and geographic boundaries.

OBJECTIVES: Students will read an Inca prayer and explore its meaning in terms of general human feelings and desires.

MATERIALS: Photocopies of the poem.

PROCEDURE: Distribute the poem to the class and have them read it.  
Discuss in class:

1. Does the prayer or poem seem very different to students from what they have been exposed to?
2. How does the author of the prayer feel about:
  - a) nature?
  - b) reasons to pray?
  - c) description of a Supreme Being?
  - d) location of a Supreme Being?
  - e) possibility of knowing a Supreme Being?
3. Can the students identify similarities with religions they know about? Differences?



Prayer to Viracocha

This prayer is addressed to Viracocha (pronounced Wiracocha). In Inca lore he was the supreme creator of the sun, and the great god of all humans and things on earth.

Oh Viracocha! Lord of the Universe;  
Whether you are male,  
Whether you are female,  
Lord of reproduction,  
Whatever you may be,  
Oh Lord of divination,  
Where are you?  
You may be above,  
You may be below,  
Or perhaps around  
Your splendid throne and sceptre.  
Oh, hear me!  
From the sky above  
Where you may be,  
From the sea beneath  
Where you may be,  
Creator of the world,  
Maker of all men;  
Lord of all Lords,  
My eyes fail me  
For longing to see you;  
For my only desire to know you.  
Might I behold you,  
Might I know you,  
Might I understand you.  
Oh, look down upon me,  
For you know me.  
The sun - the moon -  
The day - the night -  
Spring - winter,  
Are not made in vain  
By you, O Viracocha!  
They all travel  
To the assigned place;  
They all arrive  
At their destined ends,  
Wherever you please.  
You hold the royal sceptre.  
Oh hear me!  
Let it not be  
That I should grow tired,  
That I should die.