

# S. America

**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.

P-31  
I

**CATEGORY:** PERU: NOW

**CONCEPTS:** RACE/ETHNICITY, social class, language

**ACTIVITY:** MINIDRAMA. After students have read background information on language, they will read and/or act out a mini-drama in which a problem must be solved. Students will try to do so based on the reading.

**OBJECTIVES:** The students will be able to account for language variations in South America and gain some awareness of the separatism in which many natives still reside in some South American countries, principally Peru.

**MATERIALS:** 1) A brief reading that generally describes the non-universality of language in South America and more specifically deals with Quechua, the language of the Incas of Peru.

2) A mini-drama which requires some problem-solving.

**PROCEDURE:** 1) To introduce the unit, a class discussion on language variations within our own country is recommended. The following questions might be used:

1. In the U.S. what are some pronunciation differences from region to region? Vocabulary differences? (Ex. "soda" vs. "pop"; "bubbler" vs. "drinking fountain")

2. Are there groups of people in the U.S. who do not speak English? Ask for examples. (Include American Indians, if not mentioned by students.)

2) Students will read information sheet.

3) Students may read and/or act out mini-drama.

4) The class may vote on the answers and, if necessary, an explanation should follow.

**RELATED ACTIVITY:** The students should create their own mini-dramas in which a dilemma is caused due to a language problem. It could involve a student from Peru visiting a U.S. city or town and the language problem may be one of pronunciation, vocabulary, or dialect.

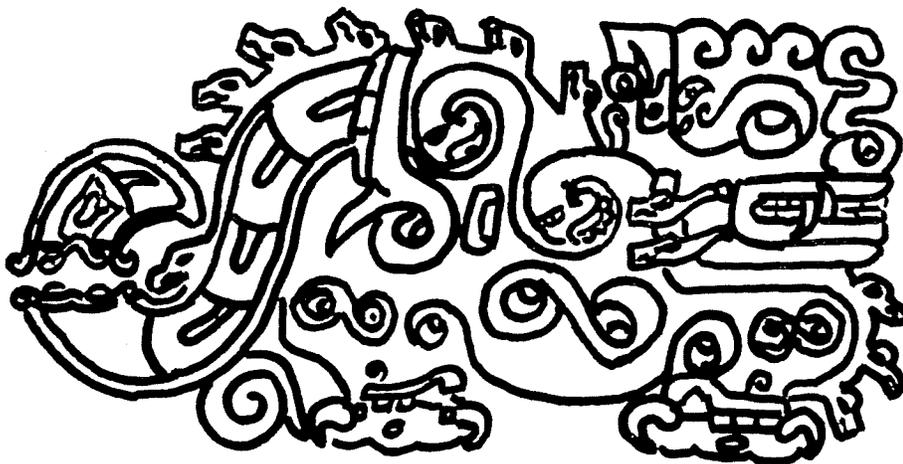
**VOCABULARY:** Conquistadores, Quechua

## QUECHUA: ONE LATIN AMERICAN LANGUAGE

Contrary to popular belief, South America is a landmass on which many languages are spoken, not only Spanish. Aside from the obvious Brazil, where Portuguese is the principal (but not only) language, there is much variety throughout the area. Paraguay, for example, has two official languages: Spanish and Guaraní. English is the major language of Guyana and the East coast of Nicaragua.

It is the Indian population that provides the greatest evidence of language variation. Many major Indian groups inhabited the South American continent when the "conquistadores" arrived in the 16th century. They include the Araucanians in what is now Chile, the Aymara in highland Bolivia, the Chibchas in present-day Colombia, the Guaraní Indians in Paraguay, and the Incas in Peru, Ecuador and parts of Bolivia. Naturally, there were hundreds of smaller groups throughout the continent, who spoke different languages, many of which are still spoken today by the descendants of these groups of original Americans.

At the time of the Spanish conquest, there were some 24 million Indians in South America. The largest of the then existing empires was that of the Incas. In order to strengthen their rule over the many areas they conquered, they had made Quechua, their language, the official language throughout their territory. Although the Spanish "conquistadores" destroyed the Inca empire and imposed their own culture, Quechua still thrives in the Andean highlands. In Peru, for example, many rural people speak only Quechua, while even in the capital city, Lima, Quechua can be heard spoken by recent immigrants from the countryside. Recently, a renewed interest in the Inca roots of Peru has led to increased pride in the Inca language, and books, radio shows, songs and films can be found in Quechua.



## MINI-DRAMA

Steve, an AFS student from Detroit, Michigan, is living in Lima, Peru with a family. In this mini-drama he is with his Peruvian brother, Alfredo, in the city of Cuzco, ancient capital of the Inca empire.

Imagine that the two are speaking Spanish, Alfredo's native language and the language generally spoken in Lima.

ALFREDO: I don't know if this is the street that goes to the train station or not.

STEVE: Haven't you been here in Cuzco before?

ALFREDO: Yes, once when I was on vacation five years ago, but I don't remember the city too well.

STEVE: Then let's ask someone. Here comes a man. Sir, could you tell me where the train station is?

ALFREDO: But this man is an Indian.

STEVE: Sir, we want to go to the station where the trains leave. Do you know where it is?

ALFREDO: Steve, I think you're wasting your time asking him.

STEVE: Just wait. Sir, could you at least tell us the name of the street that we're on.

ALFREDO: Come on, Steve. I think I can find the station.

STEVE: O.K. but how can anyone be so rude. He didn't even have the courtesy to answer me.

Why didn't the man answer them?

- A. The man is most-likely deaf and dumb.
- B. The man is also a stranger in Cuzco and didn't see the point in trying to give directions.
- C. The man does not speak Spanish.
- D. The man is an Indian and they do not speak to strangers in public.

## ANSWERS TO MINI-DRAMA:

- A. Possibly, but very unlikely.
- B. This may be true as the man may have come to Cuzco for market day, but if this were the only reason, he at least could have said that he was not from Cuzco either.
- C. Correct! Nearly fifty percent of the people of Peru are Indians. A large percentage of them do not speak Spanish, but rather Quechua, the language of the Incas.
- D. If you went to the market in Cuzco, which is certainly a public place, you would hear the Indians talking a great deal. This is not the reason the man did not speak to Steve and Alfredo.



Cuzco Cathedral