Mysteries of the Ancient Americas
By Scott Gillam

Summary
The Olmec people along the Gulf Coast of Mexico developed an advanced civilization. Their descendants, the Maya, developed a method of writing. The Aztec spread across Mexico and developed a more unified political system. The Moche Empire along the coast of Peru began around A.D. 100 and disappeared 700 years later. The Inca Empire began about A.D. 1200 and lasted more than 300 years. The Anasazi civilization began about 100 B.C. and left suddenly about 1,300 years later. The Olmec, Maya, Moche, and Anasazi were probably overcome by one or more factors. The Aztec and the Inca were defeated by the Spanish in the early 1500s. Recent archaeological discoveries have made scientists still uncertain about the origins of early Americans.

Before Reading
Building Background
Build background for the book by allowing students to observe the book’s art and predict what some of the topics covered will be. Make sure students are familiar with the key vocabulary and concepts. Encourage students to discuss and share what they may already know about the ancient Americas.

Vocabulary
peninsula, aqueduct, codex, chinampa, causeway, alliance, quipu, pit house, pueblo, adobe

Comprehension Skill: Compare and Contrast
To compare is to tell how two or more things are alike. To contrast is to tell how two or more things are different. Writers may use clue words such as like, similar, as, both, and also to show comparisons. Clue words such as unlike, different, and but show contrasts. As you read, look for comparisons and contrasts about the ancient Americas.

During Reading
Think Critically
1. Which civilizations discussed in this book were conquered by the Spanish? (Aztec and Inca)
2. What evidence shows that the Mayan civilization was advanced? (The Maya developed a calendar, kept astronomical records, and had a method of writing.)
3. Compare and contrast the Moche and the Aztec civilizations. (The Moche Empire developed along coastal Peru. The Aztec arose in present-day Mexico. Both empires had harsh political systems. The Aztec were defeated by the Spanish, but the Moche disappeared probably because of environmental causes.)
4. How was Francisco Pizarro able to defeat the Inca? (Smallpox killed millions of people, and the Inca were fighting a civil war.)

After Reading
Writing
Choose an early American group that is not mentioned in this book. Research the group and write a magazine article about it. Write your article on a separate sheet of paper.

Organize Information
Graphic Organizer: Compare and Contrast Chart
Have students use the Compare and Contrast chart to compare and contrast four or more facts about the civilizations of the ancient Americas.
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✓ Compare and contrast four or more facts about the civilizations of the ancient Americas.
✓ In the “Compare” box, write how the facts are alike.
✓ In the “Contrast” box, write how the facts are different.