

App Developer: Decline of Mayan Civilization

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, you will think like an app developer and create an app that students, historians, and other professionals can use as a forum to debate about historical events, including the decline of the Mayan civilization.

Activity

Step 1: Background on Decline of Mayan Civilization (10 minutes)

- Show [Video: Decline of Mayan Civilization](#).
- As a class, briefly discuss what students think is the key to a successful civilization (e.g., legal/justice system, businesses, ability to grow food). One place to start the conversation is to have students discuss positive and negative parts of the United States as a civilization. What things lead to the U.S. being successful? What things could be improved upon to make the United States a more functional society? Discuss how historians and other experts study what makes a successful civilization so they can analyze why some civilizations fell apart at different points in history.
- Next, introduce the idea that historians and other professionals often disagree on what makes a society successful. Ask students why they think professionals disagree on the decline of the Mayan civilization.
- Provide students with [Handout: Different Beliefs From Different Professionals](#). Discuss how professionals study certain parts of a civilization and can often think that the part they study is the most important. For example if you study agriculture, you might think that agriculture is the most important part of a civilization. Explain to students that this handout contains claims from different professionals about reasons for the decline of the Mayan civilization. There are different claims to show that different professionals have different ideas about why the civilization fell apart. For example, an archaeologist who studies artifacts might have found an artifact that indicates that there was a civil war that caused the civilization to fall apart. However, an environmentalist might have proof that a drought caused the civilization to fall apart.

Step 2: Activity Set Up (10 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will create an app called "Debate and Decide." The goal of the app is to provide a forum for people to share information, make claims, and debate about historical and current events.
- Today, students will create a wireframe for section of the app where people can debate causes of the decline of the Mayan civilization. A wireframe is a series of pictures and words that show what an app will look like once it is built.
- Provide students with [Handout: Steps to Create a Wireframe](#). As a class, read through Step 1. Discuss how the app will have 3 main sections. For each section, students will need to use [Handout: Different Beliefs From Different Professionals](#) to help them create their app. They can also use information from the video or other sources.
- Divide students into pairs to complete the activity. Students can also work independently or in small groups.

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Step 3: Create Sections of the App (25+ minutes)

- Have students create the three sections of their app.
- As students are working, ask the following:
 - Why is it important for experts to debate with other experts and also debate with students about historical events?
 - How will your app encourage respectful dialogue? What will happen if someone is rude and disrespectful when he or she is using the app?
 - How can the app encourage people to discuss different reasons related to the decline of the Mayan civilization?

Step 4: Class Presentation and Discussion (10 minutes)

- Have students present their apps to the class. Then, have a concluding class discussion about how the app will allow professionals and students to have a place to discuss different reasons behind the decline of the Mayan civilization.
- If time permits, discuss other ways the app can be used (e.g., one part of the app compares the decline of different civilizations, one part of the app compared ancient civilizations to modern civilizations, one part of the app talks about other key historical events).

Materials List

Provided online:

- Video: Decline of Mayan Civilization
- Handout: Different Beliefs from Different Professionals
- Handout: Steps to Create a Wireframe

Not provided online:

- Colored pencils, pens, or markers

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