

The Sport of Life and Death Mesoamerican Ballgame

An Exhibition at the Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, in the fall of 2001 explores the ballgame of the ancient civilizations of America. This exhibit will travel to New Orleans, Omaha, and Newark in 2002. The website offers an opportunity to learn about the game and the cultures who invented and played it.

Go to <http://ballgame.org/> to find the answers to the questions. After the introduction, click on the top left circle "Explore World."

1. How many cultures lived in Mesoamerica over 3000 years?
2. Where is Mesoamerica?

Click on "Explore" on the right to enter the next page of the site. Click on each of the cultures listed on the left to answer these questions.

Olmecs

1. What does *Olmec* mean?
2. Where did they live?
3. How are they related to the other Mesoamerican cultures?
4. What kind of number system did they use?
5. What was found at El Manatí?
6. What unique sculptures were found at San Lorenzo?

Teotihuacan

1. Where is Teotihuacan?
2. What was the population?
3. What are frescoes?
4. What kind of architecture was used?
5. What was the largest structure in the Americas before the 20th century?
6. Who made Teotihuacan a site for pilgrimage?
7. What are the names of the two largest pyramids?

Maya

1. What are the major accomplishments of the Maya?
2. Who ruled the society of the Maya?
3. Where is the largest known ball court?
4. Who explored Uxmal in the 1840's?
5. What are the significant features of Palenque?
6. How large is Tikal? In what country is it located?
7. What is depicted on the stairway at Yaxchilan?
8. What is a significant feature of Bonampak?
9. Where is Copán? What is significant about the ball court there?

Veracruz

1. Which conquistador landed in Veracruz to begin the Spanish Conquest of México?
2. What was the major accomplishment of the civilization of Veracruz?
3. What does *Veracruz* mean?
4. How many ball courts are there in El Tajín?

Toltec

1. What is the major Toltec site?
2. What significant feature can be seen on the ball court there?

Aztec

1. What is the name of the Aztec language?
2. What is another name for the Aztecs?
3. What was the name of their capital city? Where was it built?

Timeline of World History and Mesoamerica

List the dates given for each of these civilizations at http://www.ballgame.org/sub_section.asp?section=1&sub_section=1

Olmec
Western México
Teotihuacan
Maya
Veracruz
Toltec
Huastec
Aztec
Spanish Conquest

To discover what was happening in the rest of the world at that time, use the timeline at the bottom of the page. Find the following information by clicking on the dates.

What happened

- in Babylon in 1500 BC?
- in 1193 BC during the Trojan War?
- in Greece in 776 BC?
- in Rome in 509 BC?
- in Egypt between 300 BC and 0? Who ruled?
- in China between 300 BC and 0? What was built?
- in Britain in 43 AD?
- in Europe between AD 300-600?
- in the Middle East between AD 600-900?
- in the Middle East between AD 900-1200?
- in North America between AD 900-1200?
- in 1066?
- in 1494?
- in 1518?
- in 1519?

Explain why the Europeans were trying to reach Asia and how that affected American history.

How long was México was under the rule of Spain?

Explore the Ballgame

Go to <http://www.ballgame.org/main.asp?section=2>

Click on "The Ball" on the right. Click on The Rubber Tree.

1. What is latex?
2. What kind of climate is needed to grow rubber plants?
3. How much rubber can a tree produce in a year?
4. How long ago did Mesoamericans begin to tap the rubber tree?
5. What was the first commercial rubber product in Europe?

Click on each ball beside the ball player and watch it go through the goal.

1. Were the balls hollow or solid?
2. How much did the biggest balls weigh?
3. Who invented Vulcanization? When?
4. What did the ancient Mesoamericans use to do the same thing?
5. What else did the early Mesoamericans make out of rubber?

Click on "Uniform" at the top of the page.

List the five elements of the uniform and explain their use.
Dress the animated ball player.

Click on "Court" at the top of the page.

1. What was the shape of the court?
2. What was used to build the court?
3. Where is the ball court shown in the walk through?

Click on "Game." Watch the game.

1. Did women play?
2. Why were ballplayers sacrificed to the gods?
3. What story is told in the Popol Vuh?

Go to History of Sports.

1. How did sports develop?
2. What was the first team sport?
3. When did the modern Olympics begin?
4. Who popularized golf?
5. What did British football evolve into?

Go to How We Play the Game.

Compare sports today to ancient ballgames.

Go to "Experience the Game" to see a video clip about how the game was played.