Name: _____ Date: _____

Reading the Knots: Inca Cord Records

Circle group

The Inca lived in the Andes mountains of South America. They built a big empire. They did not write with letters. They kept records with a quipu. A quipu was a set of cords with knots.

A quipu had one main cord. Thin cords hung down from it. The cords had knots in groups. The kind of knot, its spot, and the color of the cord all had meaning. Rows of knots showed numbers.

Officials used quipus to count workers, goods in storehouses, and llamas. Special record keepers learned to tie and read them. Runners carried quipus along mountain roads to leaders far away.

Some quipus may hold stories too. Scholars still study them. Many secrets are not solved yet.

Questions

1. What did the Inca use to keep records?

_____

_____

2. Where did the Inca live?

_____

_____

3. What three things on a quipu had meaning?

_____

_____

4. What did officials count with quipus?

_____

_____

5. Why were there special record keepers?

_____

_____

6. Why do scholars still study quipus?

_____

_____

Words to know

empire: a large land with many peoples under one ruler
quipu: a set of knotted cords used to keep records
cords: thin ropes or strong strings
officials: people who do important jobs for a government
scholars: people who study a subject very closely

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Reading the Knots: Inca Cord Records

Triangle group

The Inca built a huge empire in the Andes mountains of South America. They did not have a writing system like ours. Instead, they kept records with a tool called a quipu. A quipu was a set of cords with knots tied in them.

Each quipu had one main cord. Many thinner cords hung down from it like a fringe. Knots were tied in groups along the hanging cords. The type of knot, the place where it sat, and the color of the cord all carried meaning. Experts believe that rows of knots showed numbers, using a system built on tens.

Officials used quipus to keep track of things like workers, goods in storehouses, and herds of llamas. Special record keepers were trained to tie and read them. Runners carried quipus along mountain roads to leaders in faraway places.

Some quipus may hold more than numbers, perhaps even stories. Scholars still study them today, because many of their secrets have not been solved.

Questions

1. What did the Inca use to keep records?

_____

_____

2. Where did the Inca build their empire?

_____

_____

3. What three things on a quipu could carry meaning?

_____

_____

4. What kinds of things did officials count with quipus?

_____

_____

5. Why did the Inca need special record keepers?

_____

_____

6. Why do scholars still study quipus today?

_____

_____

Words to know

empire: a large land with many peoples under one ruler
quipu: a set of knotted cords used to keep records
cords: thin ropes or strong strings
officials: people who do important jobs for a government
scholars: people who study a subject very closely

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Reading the Knots: Inca Cord Records

Square group

The Inca constructed an enormous empire in the Andes mountains of South America, yet they never developed a writing system like the one we use. Instead, they preserved their records with a device called a quipu, which consisted of cords with knots tied along them.

Every quipu had a single main cord, from which many thinner cords dangled like a fringe. Knots were tied in clusters along these hanging cords, and the style of the knot, its position, and the color of the cord all carried meaning. Experts believe that the rows of knots represented numbers, according to a system based on tens.

Government officials relied on quipus to keep track of workers, goods stored in warehouses, and herds of llamas. Specially trained record keepers learned how to tie and interpret them, and runners carried quipus along mountain roads to leaders in distant places.

Certain quipus may contain more than numbers, perhaps even stories. Scholars continue to study them today, because many of their secrets have never been solved.

Questions

1. What device did the Inca use to preserve their records?

_____

_____

2. In what part of the world did the Inca construct their empire?

_____

_____

3. Which three features of a quipu carried meaning?

_____

_____

4. What did government officials keep track of with quipus?

_____

_____

5. Why were specially trained record keepers necessary?

_____

_____

6. Why do scholars continue to study quipus?

_____

_____

Words to know

empire: a large land with many peoples under one ruler
quipu: a set of knotted cords used to keep records
cords: thin ropes or strong strings
officials: people who do important jobs for a government
scholars: people who study a subject very closely

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Reading the Knots: Inca Cord Records

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Reading the Knots: Inca Cord Records

Easier · 120 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.1

1. A quipu, a set of cords with knots.
2. In the Andes mountains of South America.
3. The kind of knot, its spot, and the color of the cord.
4. Workers, goods in storehouses, and llamas.
5. It took training to tie and read a quipu.
6. Many of their secrets are not solved yet.

Triangle: Reading the Knots: Inca Cord Records

This passage · 163 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5

1. A tool called a quipu, made of cords with knots tied in them.
2. In the Andes mountains of South America.
3. The type of knot, where it sat, and the color of the cord.
4. Workers, goods in storehouses, and herds of llamas.
5. Tying and reading a quipu took training.
6. Many of their secrets have not been solved yet.

Square: Reading the Knots: Inca Cord Records

Harder · 169 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 9.8

1. A quipu, which was made of cords with knots tied along them.
2. In the Andes mountains of South America.
3. The style of the knot, its position, and the color of the cord.
4. Workers, goods stored in warehouses, and herds of llamas.
5. Tying and interpreting a quipu required training and skill.
6. Many of the secrets of the quipus have never been solved.