

# Machu Picchu

A Reading A-Z Level V Leveled Book  
Word Count: 1,132

LEVELED BOOK • V

# Machu Picchu

## Connections

### Writing

Create a travel brochure for Machu Picchu. Include information from the book to entice travelers to visit this ancient site.

### Social Studies

Research to learn more about one of the structures at Machu Picchu. Make a model of the structure and list some facts about it.

Reading A-Z

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## Focus Question

What do people today know about Machu Picchu and the Inca people?

## Words to Know

conquistadors	refuge
Inca	solstice
irrigated	strategic
natural resources	terraces
observatory	theories
quarry	World Heritage Site

Front cover: Machu Picchu is so high that clouds often pay a visit. In the Inca language, *machu* means "old," and *picchu* means "peak."

Title page: The number of visitors to Machu Picchu surpassed one million for the first time in 2012. New rules aim to limit the average daily number of visitors.

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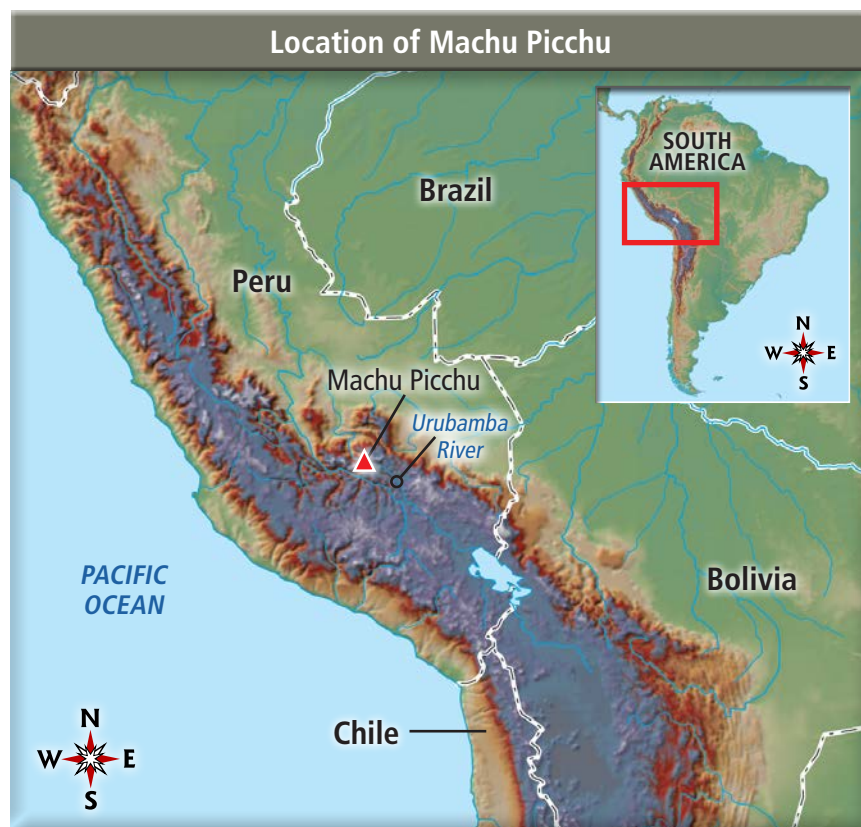
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## Correlation

### LEVEL V

Fountas & Pinnell	R
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40



## Table of Contents

A Mysterious Place .....	4
Understanding the Inca .....	6
Why They Built .....	8
Building Machu Picchu .....	10
The Spanish Conquer the Inca .....	14
Machu Picchu Today .....	15
Glossary .....	16



## A Mysterious Place

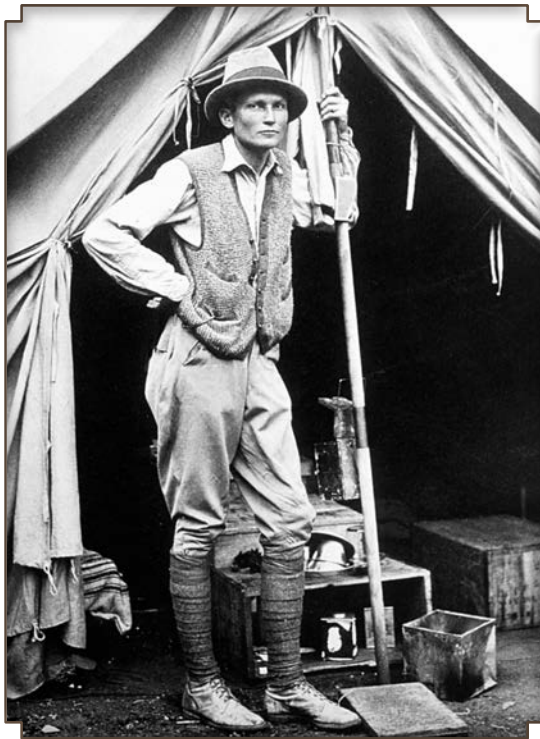
Nestled in the towering Andes Mountains of Peru—2,350 meters (7,710 ft.) above sea level—a priceless treasure awaits visitors. Machu Picchu, an ancient city of the **Inca**, is one of the most mysterious and haunting places in the world.

Hidden by forest trees and vines, Machu Picchu remained unknown to most of the world for more than four hundred years. Then, in 1911, a history professor named Hiram Bingham rediscovered it. Bingham traveled to South America on a hunch that he might find an ancient Inca city somewhere in the Andes Mountains. Once there, a local farmer told him of a city high in the mountains that had been abandoned long ago.



Bingham made the steep and difficult climb up the long, overgrown path and was amazed at what he saw when he reached the top. Through the tangled trees, he found a ruin—a beautiful example of Inca architecture.

He saw expertly made stone walls, **irrigated** farming areas, sacred temples, and ancient paved roads. He knew these early ruins could provide a key to understanding the Inca people—a group that flourished in South America during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Bingham wanted to explore the site and learn more.



Hiram Bingham was born in Hawaii in 1875 and died in 1956 in Washington, D.C.

## Understanding the Inca

It is not easy to learn about the Inca because many experts think they had no written language. However, archaeologists and historians can make educated guesses about them.

Some historians think that the Inca began as a small clan of cave dwellers. They were one of many groups living in the Andes Mountains. By 1400 CE, the Inca began to conquer other groups that lived in the area.

The emperor Pachacuti (pah-chah-KOO-tee) ruled the Inca from 1438 to 1471 and led them during some of their most successful years. Machu Picchu was most likely built for Pachacuti.

### Do You Know?

Experts think Inca warriors threw bola stones at the legs of enemies to trip and catch them.





Pachacuti means “he who remakes the world” in the Inca language. He did, indeed, remake the Inca world into an empire.

A fierce warrior, Pachacuti commanded a strong army, and they defeated many neighboring kingdoms. Under his leadership the empire stretched beyond the borders of present-day Peru to include present-day Ecuador. Over time the Inca Empire grew to include about twelve million people.



Archaeologists excavate Machu Picchu in 2016.

### Why They Built

No one knows why the Inca built Machu Picchu. Archaeologists have **theories**, though—many different theories. Bingham first thought Machu Picchu was the birthplace of Inca society. He later changed his mind and thought it was the last **refuge** of the Inca, where Inca rulers battled Spanish **conquistadors**. Today, archaeologists know that refuge was actually in the jungle, many kilometers from Machu Picchu.

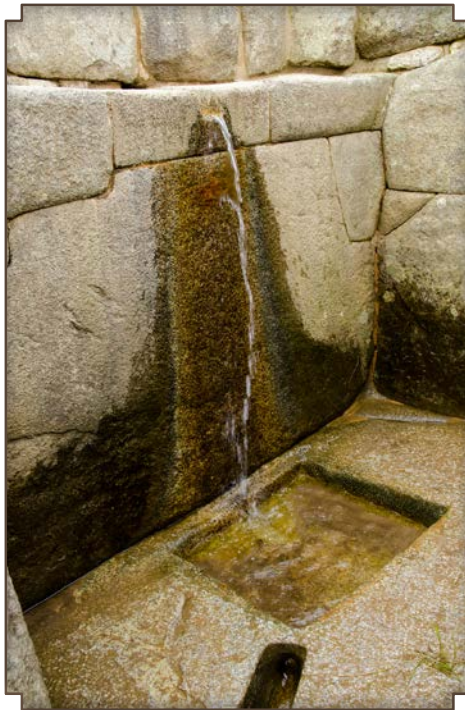
Dozens of other theories have been put forth about Machu Picchu. Different scholars thought it was a prison, a trade hub, a women’s retreat, a place to crown kings, or a station for testing new crops. Today, many archaeologists think that Machu Picchu served as a royal estate for Inca emperors.



Whatever its purpose, experts think the Inca chose the spot for the city because of its **strategic** location. They could observe people moving below in the valley, but those below could not see that there was a city on top! Even if they had, the location would have been easy to defend.

Another advantage to its location would have been access to **natural resources**. Although the Urubamba River flows far below Machu Picchu, a rain-fed spring feeds the area. A stone foundation still stands today where the water emerges from the ground. The Inca built a system for collecting spring water into the hillside. A canal carried river water to fountains, which were used for drinking and bathing. The location is also near a granite **quarry**, so workers would not have had to carry heavy boulders from a great distance.

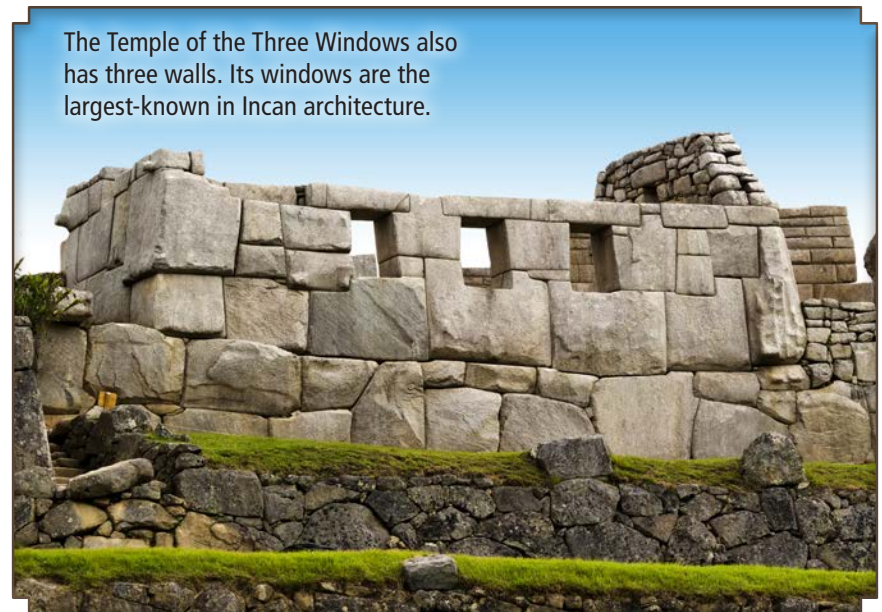
Fountains at Machu Picchu still flow today.



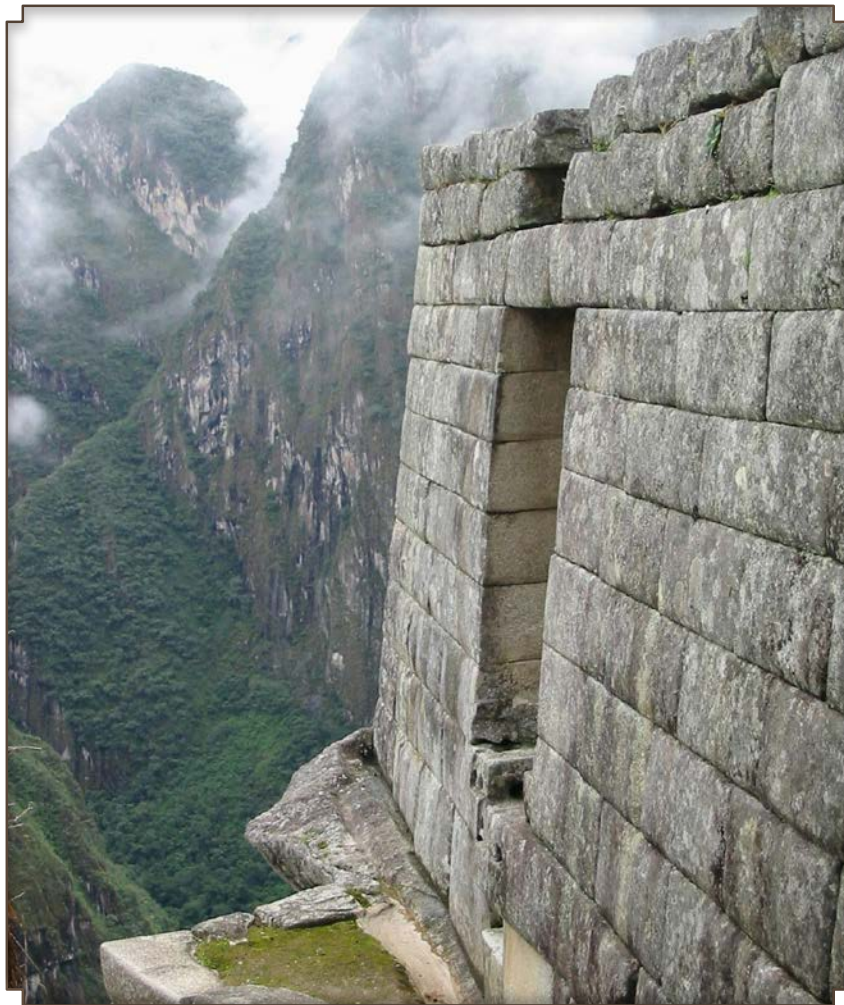
## Building Machu Picchu

The Inca most likely began construction of Machu Picchu in the mid-1400s. They may have used wooden wedges to carve the stones. This method involved drilling holes into rocks and inserting wet wooden wedges into them. Next, builders waited until the wedges froze. The ice forced the rock apart.

This method can't explain the perfect bricks, however. How builders shaped huge blocks of granite remains a mystery. Carving granite is tough even with today's technology. It may have taken them many months to complete one wall.



The Temple of the Three Windows also has three walls. Its windows are the largest-known in Incan architecture.



After standing on the mountaintop for centuries, the walls of Machu Picchu are still in remarkably good shape.

However they built them, the Inca are known for their tightly interlocking walls, which are seen in few other places in the world. The Inca fit stones together so well that nothing was needed to hold them in place. Today, if you tried to slip a knife between the stones, it would not fit.

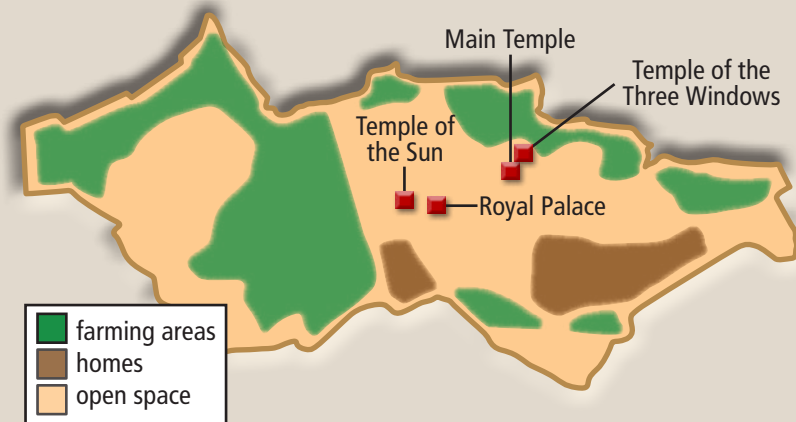
## Machu Picchu Features



Royal Palace



Temple of the Sun



Archaeologists think the city was built for rich and powerful Inca in the 1450s. It was a royal spot where the ruler could relax and entertain important visitors. A total of about 150 homes were built at Machu Picchu. The royal palace and home of the Inca emperor, Pachacuti, was perhaps the grandest of all.



Bingham found that the Inca divided Machu Picchu into two areas, one urban and one agricultural. The urban area contains the main temples and other buildings. Some of these buildings were the living quarters of the emperor, and others were for the workers and their families.

Experts think the urban area's Temple of the Sun might have been used as a solar **observatory**. On the winter **solstice**—in late June in the Southern Hemisphere—sunlight enters a window and shines on a large rock in the middle of the room.

The agricultural area is a series of **terraces** where crops were grown. Machu Picchu receives a great deal of rainfall. The Inca knew that large amounts of water running downhill could easily erode the soil. Inca engineers designed the agricultural area so rainwater would drain on either side of the terraces and into the forest below.



How did the Inca farm on steep hillsides? They built short stone walls that kept layers of soil in place.

## The Spanish Conquer the Inca

After Machu Picchu was built and Pachacuti died, the Inca Empire continued to grow. When Huayna (WY-nah) Capac became the new ruler in 1493, he extended the empire farther than ever before. After Huayna Capac died in 1527, his two sons fought over who would become the new leader. Atahualpa (ah-tah-WAHL-pah) won, but in 1532 Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro arrived. His goal was to take over the Inca Empire. After a surprise attack, many Inca died, and Atahualpa was held for ransom.



Francisco Pizarro was an explorer who established Spanish rule over the Inca.

The Inca offered Pizarro more than 22 metric tons (24 t.) of gold and silver to free Atahualpa. Still, Pizarro ordered Atahualpa killed. People lived in Machu Picchu for only a few decades longer.

Some historians think years of fighting and disease brought by Europeans weakened the Inca Empire and caused its decline. After the Inca abandoned Machu Picchu, it remained hidden by trees and vines for centuries. Only a few people who farmed the area were aware of its existence.





Some tourists hike three or four days to reach Machu Picchu. Trains also take people to the site.

### Machu Picchu Today

Today, Machu Picchu is Peru's main tourist attraction. Hundreds of thousands of visitors flock to it each year. In 1983, Machu Picchu was named a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) **World Heritage Site**. UNESCO seeks to protect and preserve outstanding historical places. These sites have a special cultural meaning for all of humankind. The group also provides money to help repair and conserve Machu Picchu.

Historians continue to learn more about the Inca and Machu Picchu. There are still many mysteries to uncover about this amazing place.

### Glossary

<b>conquistadors</b> (n.)	the Spanish word for <i>conquerors</i> ; men who conquered areas of the New World for Spain in the sixteenth century (p. 8)
<b>Inca</b> (n.)	a people and empire present in the Andes Mountains of South America until the Spanish conquest (p. 4)
<b>irrigated</b> (adj.)	supplied with water for crops (p. 5)
<b>natural resources</b> (n.)	things found in nature that are valuable to humans, such as water, minerals, and forests (p. 9)
<b>observatory</b> (n.)	a place used for scientific observation of things in nature, such as stars, weather, or earthquakes (p. 13)
<b>quarry</b> (n.)	a place where marble, slate, or other kinds of stone are excavated (p. 9)
<b>refuge</b> (n.)	a place of safety or comfort (p. 8)
<b>solstice</b> (n.)	either of two times of the year when the Sun is farthest from the equator (p. 13)
<b>strategic</b> (adj.)	designed for a purpose; relating to a careful plan for solving a problem or achieving a goal (p. 9)
<b>terraces</b> (n.)	flat areas made in a hillside that are used for farming (p. 13)
<b>theories</b> (n.)	possible explanations (p. 8)
<b>World Heritage Site</b> (n.)	a place that has cultural or scientific value and is recognized and protected by the United Nations (p. 15)