

THE AZTEC CALENDAR STONE BY REBECCA HINSON

(NONFICTION)

Questions for *The Aztec Calendar Stone* by Rebecca Hinson

LEVEL 1: What does it say?

General Understanding

- Quote from the text when explaining how the Aztec Calendar Stone reflects the astronomy, calendar cycles and mythology of the Aztecs.

Key Details

- How did the Aztecs create a 365-day solar calendar? What knowledge is the basis of our 365-day calendar today?
- The Aztecs believed their gods created rainy and dry seasons. Explain how the tilt of the earth's axis influences seasons, as we know today.

LEVEL 2: How does it work?

Vocabulary

- What is the meaning of epoch, axis, orbit, hemisphere, solstice, equinox, and relief?

Structure

- *Legend of Tenochtitlán* and *The Aztec Calendar Stone* both reveal the significance of the sun god in Aztec culture. How is the sun god presented in each book?

Author's Craft

- Analyze the account of *The Aztec Calendar Stone* by Hinson and *The Aztec Calendar Stone* (below), edited by Vilella and Miller and describe how the points of view differ.

The rim of the stone takes the form of two serpents meeting at tails and heads; they are typically identified as Xiuhcoátl or Fire Serpents, mythological creatures who symbolize the twenty-four-hour course of the sun through the daytime sky and the earth at night. An inner ring contains all twenty day-signs of the Aztec calendar. In the center of the reliefs there appear the frontal, or *en face*, face and the hands of what is certainly a deity; these are enframed by the six-lobed Postclassic graphic symbol for the word Ollin, which means "earth," "movement," or "earthquake."

LEVEL 3: What does it mean?

Author's Purpose

- Explain the author's interpretation of the symbols of the stone. How does her interpretation identify the Aztecs' perceived need for human sacrifice?

Intertextual Connections

- Referring to this text and *The Aztec Calendar Stone* (below), edited by Villela and Miller, what was the purpose of the stone?

"we are working from the assumption that the monument was placed in a horizontal position, precisely as described in the *Durán Codex*. . . we must take into account. . . its function as a sacrifice stone, where, once the captive warrior had been sacrificed, Tonatiuh, represented there, was nourished with the victim's blood and heart. Therefore, its main purpose was to feed the Sun so that it would not stop moving."

- Referring to this text, the *Legend of Tenochtitlán* and *The Aztec Calendar Stone* (below), edited by Villela and Miller, how is the Aztec belief that the Sun is swallowed by the earth each night and reborn each morning symbolized by the birth of Huitzilopochtli?

"The sun will also penetrate into the night, after being devoured by Tlatecuhtli in the West, the feminine side of the Universe. And here we can see something very important; when it is gobbled up by the *vagina dentata*, with its huge, sharp teeth, the Sun passed into the terrestrial, nocturnal, female womb, where its new birth was gestated. It was a type of rite of passage where the Sun was reborn from the earth's womb the following morning."

"it is the myth of the fight of Huitzilopochtli (the Sun) against Coyolxauhqui (the Moon) and the centzonhuitznahuas (the stars of the South), that talks about this important moment when the sun arms itself with the Xiuhcōatl to beat its enemies and be born from Coatlicue (the Earth)."

LEVEL 4: What does it inspire you to do?

Opinion with Evidence or Argument

- Gathering information from the text, the Khan Academy video, "The Sun Stone (The Calendar Stone)" and *The Aztec Calendar Stone* by Villela and Miller, write or speak about how the Aztec Calendar Stone reflects the beliefs of the Aztecs.

Sources

Khan Academy, "The Sun Stone (The Calendar Stone)"

Khristaan D. Villela and Mary Ellen Miller, *The Aztec Calendar Stone*

Rebecca Hinson, *Legend of Tenochtitlan*