

The Mayans

Learning Objective:

To explore where and when the remains of the Mayan civilisation were discovered.



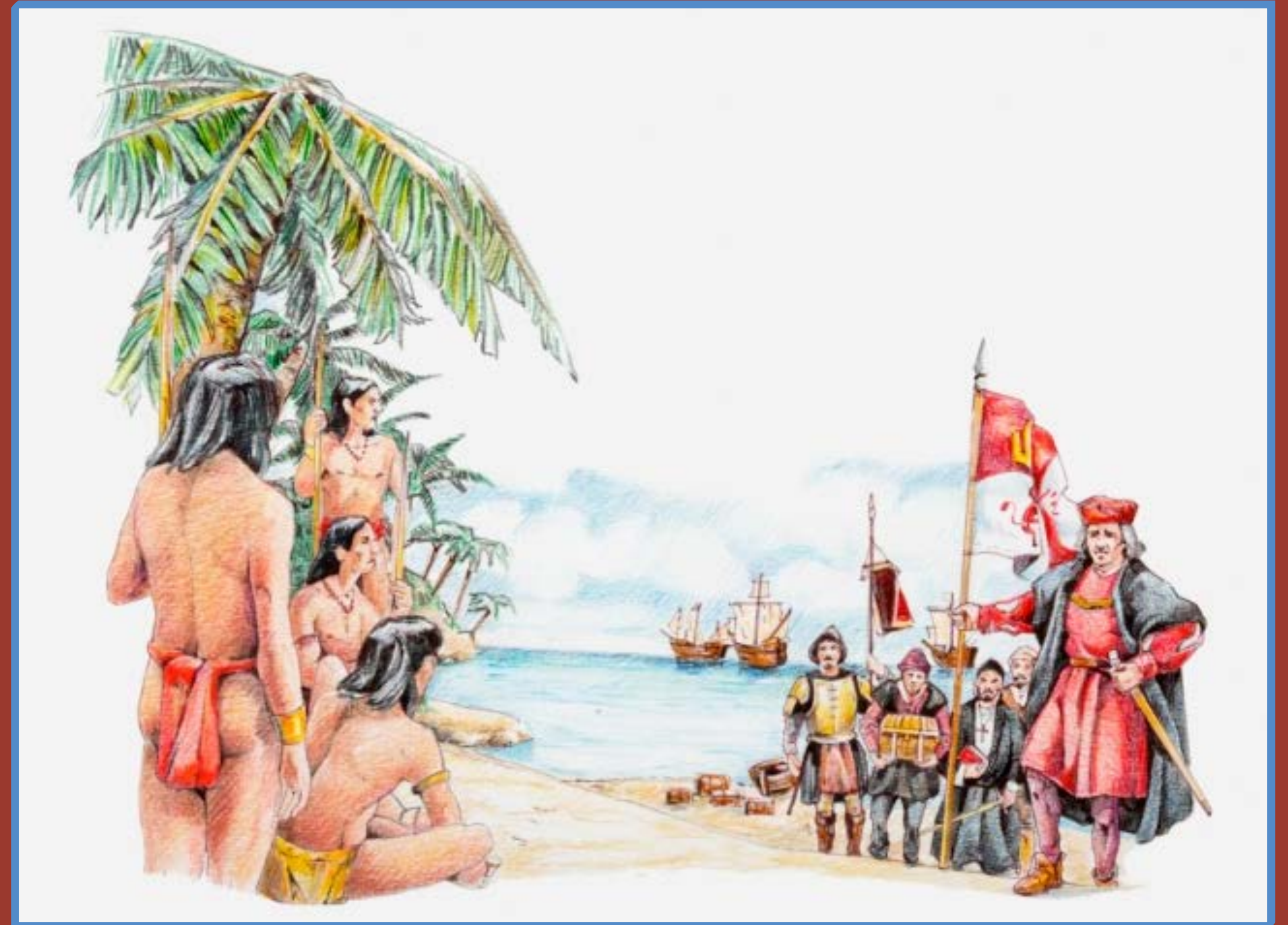
What do you
already know about the
Mayans?

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Europeans first discovered the Americas in 1492 when Christopher Columbus first sailed from Europe to America. He returned with tales of a rich and vast land filled with gold and other precious materials.

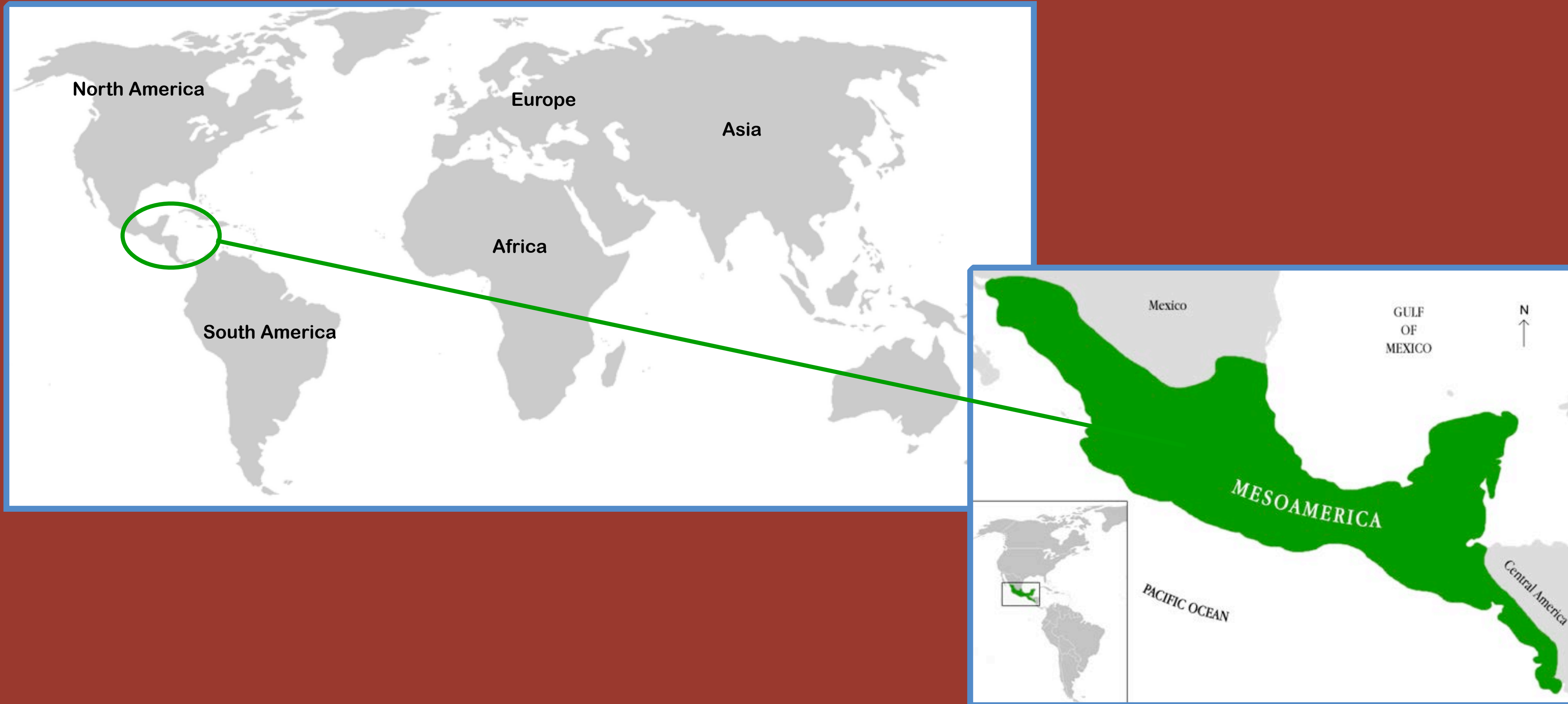
After that, many other Europeans sailed to America in search of gold and glory. They met lots of native people. The Europeans thought they were savages and battled to take over their lands.



In 1519, a group of Spanish explorers, led by a man called Hernan Cortès, sailed to Mexico. There they met a people called the Aztecs. The Spanish explorers (who came to be known as conquistadors) fought to take over the Aztec lands and after two years they succeeded. The Aztecs were defeated and Mexico became a Spanish colony.



Once the conquistadors had conquered the Aztecs, they went on to explore the rest of Mesoamerica. Mesoamerica is the land in between North and South America.



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The conquistadors travelled through Mesoamerica. Some of the land was mountainous and rugged. Some was dense and humid rainforest. On their way, they came across many native people that they had to defeat before moving on.



The conquistadors thought the native people were savages who were not as advanced or as civilised as the Europeans. The Spanish believed they had more right to the land than the natives who had lived there for thousands of years.

Then one day, deep in the wild rainforest, the conquistadors came across something that amazed them.

What do you think they found?
Let's have a look...



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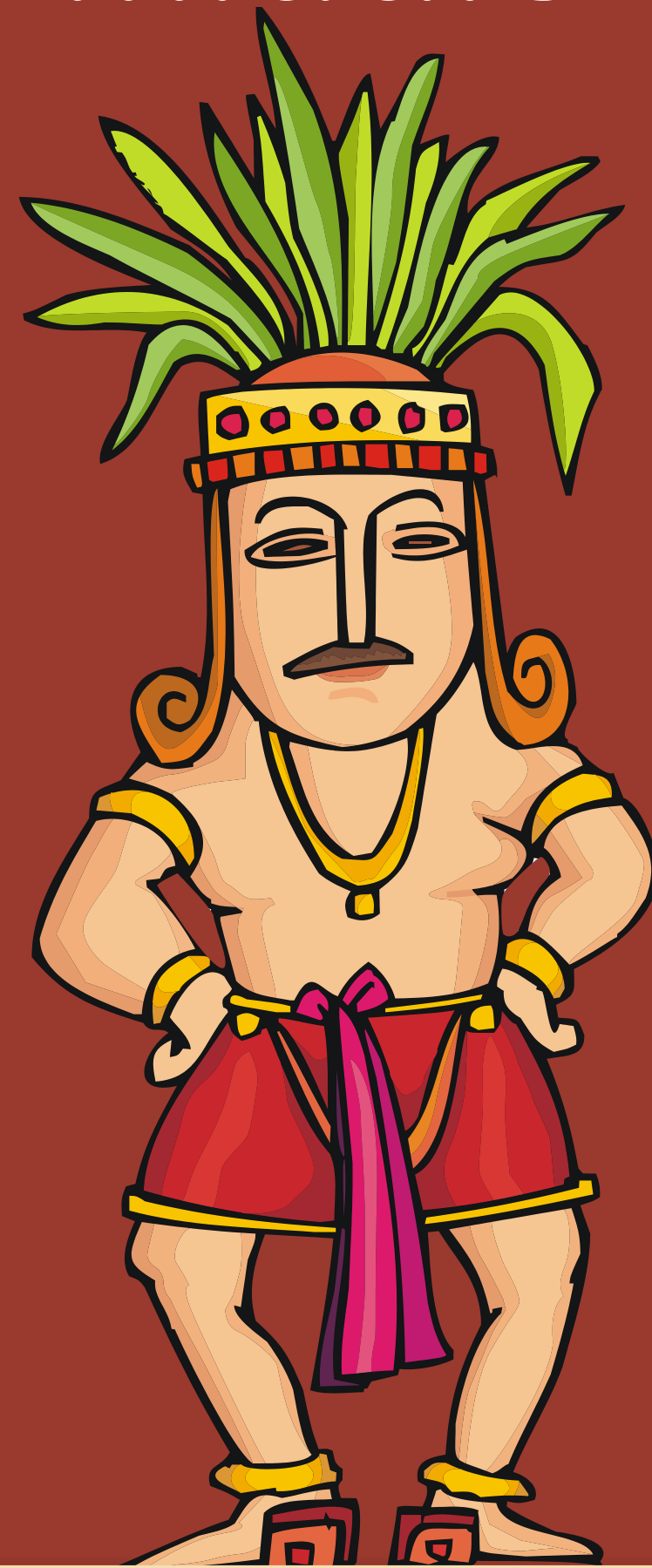


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The Spanish conquistadors discovered whole abandoned cities with strange pyramids and other buildings in the middle of the rainforest.

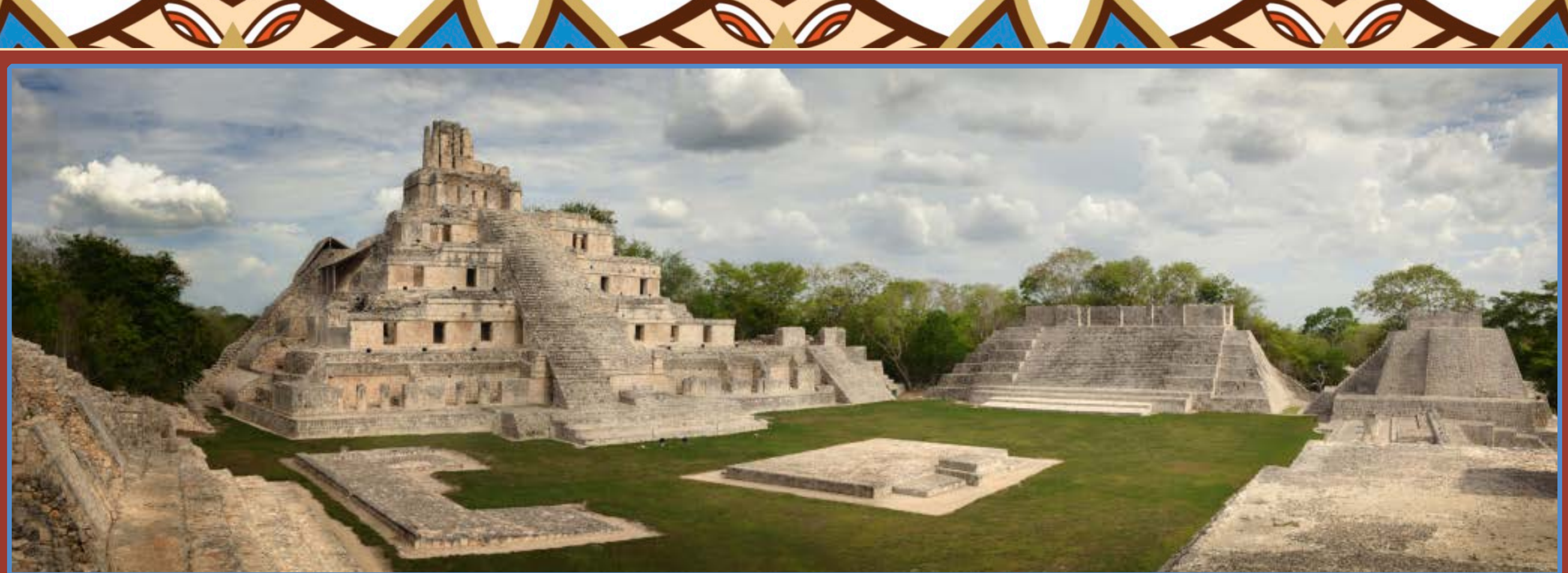
How do you think the conquistadors might have felt when they discovered these cities?



What questions do you think they might have asked about what they found?

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It wasn't until about 150 years later that more Europeans and North Americans explored these ruins further. They found many more sites and started to understand more about the people who had lived there.