

Design an Aztec Sunstone

National Curriculum Aims:

History: To study a non-European society that provides a contrast with British history.
To explore Aztec inventions and sculptures.

Maths: Compare and classify geometric shapes based on their properties and sizes.

The Sunstone is perhaps the most amazing form of Aztec technology.

The **Xiuhpohualli** calendar tracked time over 365 days of rituals by season. It predicted 5 unlucky days when disaster was likely to happen. The **Tonalpohualli** calendar had 260 days and divided time between the gods to keep the universe in balance.

It was made of stone and carved in beautiful detail.



You will need:

- A paper plate
- A wooden craft stick
- Coloured pencils or pens

What to do:

1. The Sunstone was a round stone, carved with markings in circles around a central image. Mark out four concentric circles on your paper plate.

Draw a sun with a face in the centre. This is to represent the Aztec sun god, Tonatiuh. Add features including a tongue and yellow hair.

The Aztec sunstone has carvings of animals such as jaguars and snakes. There are also intricate geometric patterns.

Draw a sun ray pattern. The Aztecs would use geometric shapes such as triangles or rectangles.

Colour a repeating pattern around the edge of the plate.

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2. Explore some geometric patterns.

Use pattern blocks to explore 2D patterns.

- ? Can you create a repeating pattern using quadrilaterals?



- ? What about triangles?



- ? What other 2D shapes would be effective?

- ? Can you make your pattern tessellate?

- ? What about combining 2D shapes to make a tessellating pattern?



- ? Experiment with rotating simple 2D shapes.



3. The Aztecs carved their sunstone but there is evidence of bright colours used in their clothing. Be inspired by the bright feathers of parrots and macaws and add colour to the details you have drawn.
4. Add a craft stick to the centre of your Aztec sunstone. The Aztecs would have used an obsidian knife, representing the gods' need for human sacrifice.
5. Take your sunstone out on a sunny day. The stick in the centre will act as a sundial. Can you tell the time?

