The Anasazi

- The Anasazi civilization existed from about 1000 B.C.E. to 1300 C.E. in the southwestern United States.
- As with the Olmecs and Mound Builders, religion was central to the Anasazi civilization.
- The Anasazi grew corn and worshipped it as well.
- They built huge pueblos in groups much like our cities today.
- Later, for reasons archaeologists cannot explain, they began building their pueblos high in cliffs. Many of them are still there today, like the Mesa Verde pueblo in Colorado.
- The Anasazi disappeared; scientists do not know why. They theorize an extended drought drove them from their land.
- This could also be why the Anasazi moved their pueblos to cliffs. It could have been a way to protect food surpluses.
- Some archaeologists believe there is evidence to suggest some Anasazi even practiced cannabilism, or the eating of human flesh.
- The Anasazi were named by the Navajo, a later group of people thought to be their descendants. Anazai means "The Ancient Ones" in the Navajo language.

The Mayans

- The Mayans lived in Meso-America, today known as Central America between 2000 B.C.E. and the mid 1500s C.E.
- They were the descendants of the Olmecs.
- The Mayans were the most advanced people in the Americas and were engineers and architects of large pyramids made from a substance they invented, called Sascab. (like cement)
- The Mayans invented the concept of the number zero which did not occur in Europe until hundreds of years later.
- Their ability to use zero to count very high enabled they to create a very accurate calendars which was round not square.
- The Mayans believed time was a circle and that certain parts of time would occur again.
- Their calendar was not just the way they marked the passage of time, it was also a big part of their religion.
- The Mayans accurately predicted solar and lunar eclipses thousands of years into the future.
- Another part of the Mayan's culture was human sacrifice.
- They believed the sun fed on blood and would stop shining if the sacrifices were no made.
- The blood was used in religious ceremonies.

The Aztecs

- Farther north from Meso-America lived a group of Native Americans called the Aztecs between 1200 C.E. and the 1520s C.E. (in Modern-Day Mexico)
- The Aztecs conquered all the tribes in central Mexico and made them pay heavy tribute or taxes.
- This enabled the Aztecs to build the greatest city in the Americas called Tenochtitlan in what is today Mexico City, one of the largest cities in the world.
- Tenochtitlan was in the middle of a lake called Lake Texcoco.
- The Aztecs were brilliant engineers, much like the Mayans.
- Much of their history was destroyed by Spanish explorers who came to colonize the land.
- The Aztecs had a calendar similar to the Mayans called a sun stone.
- Like the Mayans, the Aztecs practiced human sacrifice.
- They, too, used the blood in religious ceremonies.
- Because the Spanish explorers were Christians, they believed the Aztecs were evil because of the human sacrifices.
- This was one of the main reasons the Spanish used to justify the destruction of the Aztec culture.

The Incas

- The Incas lived high in the Andes Mountains in South America from 1200 C.E. to around the mid 1500s.
- They are known mostly for their strong central government, their buildings, and their roads.
- The Incas worshipped the sun, like many ancient people.
- They believed gold to came from the sun, and made many religious objects from it.
- These objects were holy, not used as money or to represent wealth.
- The Incas were able to build huge cities on the very tops of mountains like Machu Picchu and Cousco.
- The Incas also practiced human sacrifice, but in a different way from the Mayans and Aztecs.
- Instead of cutting the heart from the bodies of the sacrifices and beheading them, the Inca cast them off the highest of the mountains.
- Many Inca mummies have been found preserved in ice as there is a huge glacier in the mountains of South America.
- Some of these mummies look as if they are only sleeping and have not been dead for hundreds of years.
- The Inca culture was destroyed by Spanish explorers.