A. **Summarizing**  As you read about the rise and fall of Maya civilization, fill out the web diagram below.

1. Environment  
2. Urban centers  
3. Economy  
4. Social structure  
5. Religion  
6. Achievements  

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B. **Analyzing Causes**  What explanations do historians offer for the disappearance of Maya city-states? What factors do you think led to the fall of Maya civilization? Give reasons to support your answer.

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C. **Writing Expository Paragraphs**  On the back of this paper, write a paragraph explaining how each of the following relate to Maya civilization.

- Tikal  
- glyph  
- codex  
- *Popol Vuh*  

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2 UNIT 4, CHAPTER 16
Maya Pyramids
The main purpose of the Maya pyramids was to enable the priests to communicate with the gods of the people. Lofty pyramids, some reaching over 200 feet, served as a base atop which the Maya built rooftop temples. Early temples were made of wood, but later the Maya used stone. Although they had no wheeled vehicles, no horses or oxen, and no iron technology, the Maya were able to move and carve massive pieces of stone. Many of these stone structures still stand today. Inside the temples were dark, narrow rooms, some with walls brightened with brilliantly colored murals.

To reach the temples, priests had to climb steep staircases built right into the pyramid. The pyramid of El Castillo in Chichén Itzá has four symmetrical staircases and one step leading to the temple for a total of 365 steps. One historian had described these enormous staircases as “tall ladders reaching up towards an accessible heaven.” Others have suggested that the staircases were so designed to make it easier for priests to dispose of the bodies they had sacrificed to the gods.

Around the pyramids cities developed where priests, government officials, merchants, and some artisans lived. Most Maya, however, were farmers who lived outside the city and came to town for religious ceremonies. The largest Maya city was Tikal. At its height, it was the site of five pyramid-temples.

**Conclusion 1:**

- **Support:**
- **Support:**

**Conclusion 2:**

- **Support:**
- **Support:**

*SKILLBUILDER PRACTICE  Drawing Conclusions*

Drawing conclusions means analyzing what you have read and forming an opinion about its meaning. To draw conclusions, you look closely at the information presented, read “between the lines” for implied meaning, and use your own common sense to form a conclusion. Read the passage below. Then complete the chart with two conclusions you draw about Maya pyramids and cities. Cite two supporting statements for each conclusion. (See Skillbuilder Handbook)
The Maya Empire began in central Mexico around 400. As their population grew, the Maya needed to increase their food supply. As a result, innovative Maya farmers developed different farming techniques to overcome a variety of geographic obstacles.

The first illustration below shows how the Maya coped with a mountainous environment. They built terraces—stretches of narrow but level ground—into the sloping sides of mountains. An embankment of stones prevented topsoil from being washed downhill, and a drainage channel irrigated the crops on each level.

In the wet lowlands, runoff from the mountains often flooded the Maya fields and destroyed the crops. The second illustration shows how the Maya overcame this flooding. They built up the fields to allow excess water to drain off into channels. They then used these irrigation channels to control where the water went and how much water they wanted to use for irrigation. They often diverted excess water to areas that were too far from the mountains to receive runoff. The Maya then scooped soil from the banks and bottoms of these channels and spread it across the dry ground to create farmland.

These techniques allowed the Maya to farm in almost any kind of land. As a result, they lived on a rich diet of maize, beans, avocados, melons, and squash.
Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. Identify in order the layers of earth from the top down that the Maya used to construct their layered fields.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

2. Why did the Maya need to be able to farm on these different land conditions?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

3. Describe the process enabling the Maya to farm mountainous regions.
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

4. How were the Maya able to control flooding and properly irrigate their crops in extremely wet regions?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

5. How were the Maya able to farm extremely dry areas?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

6. Look again at the first illustration. Besides water for crops, what is another benefit of the irrigation channel to the terraced fields?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

7. What do you think is the purpose of the two gravel layers just under the topsoil?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Here follow the first words, the first eloquence:

There is not yet one person, one animal, bird, fish, crab, tree, rock, hollow, canyon, meadow, forest. Only the sky alone is there; the face of the earth is not clear. Only the sea alone is pooled under all the sky; there is nothing whatever gathered together. It is at rest; not a single thing stirs. It is held back, kept at rest under the sky.

Whatever there is that might be is simply not there: only the pooled water, only the calm sea, only it alone is pooled.

Whatever might be is simply not there: only murmurs, ripples, in the dark, in the night. Only the Maker, Modeler alone, Sovereign Plumed Serpent, the Bearers, Begetters are in the water, a glittering light. They are there, they are enclosed in quetzal feathers, in blue-green.

Thus the name, “Plumed Serpent.” They are great knowers, great thinkers in their very being.

And of course there is the sky, and there is also the Heart of Sky. This is the name of the god, as it is spoken.

And then came his word, he came here to the Sovereign Plumed Serpent, here in the blackness, in the early dawn. He spoke with the Sovereign Plumed Serpent, and they talked, then they thought, then they worried. They agreed with each other, they joined their words, their thoughts. Then it was clear, then they reached accord in the light, and then humanity was clear, when they conceived the growth, the generation of trees, of bushes, and the growth of life, of humankind, in the blackness, in the early dawn, all because of the Heart of Sky named Hurricane. Thunderbolt Hurricane comes first, the second is Newborn Thunderbolt, and the third is Raw Thunderbolt.

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And of course there is the sky, and there is also the Heart of Sky. This is the name of the god, as it is spoken.

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CONNECTIONS ACROSS TIME AND CULTURES

Age of Pyramids in Ancient Egypt and Mesoamerica

As you have read in this chapter, Maya culture flourished from about A.D. 250 to 900. In Chapter 2, you learned about the Old Kingdom, an early civilization that thrived in ancient Egypt from 2660 to 2180 B.C. Although separated from the Old Kingdom by time and distance, Maya culture was remarkably similar to that of the Old Kingdom. As you compare these two civilizations, look for possible reasons for these similarities.

1. In the Old Kingdom, pharaohs ruled as gods. Egyptian government was a theocracy in which the pharaoh bore full responsibility for Egypt’s government, army, and religion. How does this system of government compare with that established by the Maya?

2. Both ancient Egyptians and the Maya built great pyramids and temples. For what reasons were these structures built? What does the building of such massive public monuments reveal about each civilization?

3. Egyptian society formed a pyramid made up of royalty at the top, a large peasant class at the base, and an upper and middle class. How was Maya society structured?

4. Egyptian innovations included writing, a system of measurement and numbers, and a calendar. How do Maya achievements compare with those of ancient Egypt? What do these cultural and technological developments reveal about the Egyptians and the Maya?

5. In what others ways were ancient Egyptian and Maya civilizations similar?

6. What factors do you think might account for the similarities between the two civilizations?
Reteaching Activity  Maya Kings and Cities

Determining Main Ideas  Choose the word that most accurately completes each sentence below. Write that word in the blank provided.

Tikal  codex  glyphs  Popol Vuh

1. Maya writing was made up of 800 ______________, which stood for words and syllables.
2. A book called ______________ is the highland Maya's story of creation of the world.
3. A bark-paper book called a ______________ contained records of important historical events in the Maya world.
4. Great cities such as ______________ in northern Guatemala were built during the Classic Period of Maya civilization.

Determining Main Ideas  The following questions deal with the Maya culture. Answer them in the space provided.

5. What kind of agricultural methods did the Maya use?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

6. How did the Maya pay tribute to their gods?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

7. How were math and religion connected in the Maya culture?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

8. What is one theory as to why the Maya civilization ended?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________