

Tula and the Atlantes

On land | Mexico | about 900-1150 CE | Grades 3-5

Name _____

Date _____

The giant stone warriors of Tula once held up a temple roof, like stone pillars dressed for battle.

Read the story

Tula, once called Tollan, was the capital of the Toltecs, at its height from about 900 to 1150 CE. It was a large city, home to perhaps tens of thousands of people.

On top of Pyramid B stand the famous Atlantes, four columns carved as warriors, about 4.6 meters tall. They wear feathered headdresses and butterfly-shaped chest plates, and carry dart throwers called atlatis. They once held up the roof of a temple.

Later, the Aztecs looked up to the Toltecs as great artists and builders. They called skilled craftspeople *toltecah*, and some Aztec rulers claimed to be descended from Toltec kings. Tula also has carvings of jaguars, eagles eating hearts, and a wall of snakes eating skeletons.

How it ended

Around 1150 CE, Tula was burned and abandoned. Historians think droughts, conflict and power struggles may have caused its fall. The Aztecs later visited the ruins and took some sculptures.

Key words

- Atlantes: columns carved in the shape of people that hold up a roof
- atlatl: a spear-thrower used to throw darts farther
- obsidian: a black, glass-like volcanic rock that makes sharp blades

Wow facts

- Each Atlantean warrior is made of four stacked stone blocks.
- A reclining stone figure called a chacmool holds a bowl on its belly.
- The Aztecs thought of the Toltecs as master artists.

Talk about it

1. Why might a later empire, like the Aztecs, admire an earlier one?

2. Why would builders make pillars look like warriors?

Try this

Draw a map of Tula and the Atlantes as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. Who built Tula?

- A. The Toltecs
- B. The Inca
- C. The Vikings
- D. The Romans

2. What are the Atlantes?

- A. Giant warrior columns
- B. Fishing boats
- C. Gold coins
- D. Clay pots

3. Which later people admired the Toltecs?

- A. The Aztecs
- B. The Greeks
- C. The Egyptians
- D. The Chinese

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/tula-and-the-atlantes/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. Tula was the Toltec capital.
2. A. They are stone warrior columns that held up a temple roof.
3. A. The Aztecs saw the Toltecs as master artists.