

Textbook Account

*The following description was taken from: History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond, Pgs. 274 - 275.*

Gradually, Tenochtitlan grew into the magnificent city that so amazed the Spanish. At the center of the city - both physically and spiritually - lay a large ceremonial plaza. Here the Aztecs gathered for religious rituals, feasts, and festivals. A wall about eight feet tall enclosed this area. The wall, which was called the Coatepantli (“snake wall”), was studded with sculptures of serpents. The palaces and homes of nobles lined the outside of the wall.

The city’s main marketplace was located in the northern section, in Tlatelolco. Each day as many as 60,000 people came from all corners of the Aztec Empire to sell their wares. Goods ranged from luxury items like jade and feathers to necessities like food and rope sandals. Merchants also sold gold, silver, turquoise, animal skins, clothing, pottery, chocolate and vanilla, tools, and slaves.

Although Tenochtitlan spread over five square miles, people had an easy time getting around. Four wide avenues met at the foot of the Great Temple. A thousand workers swept and washed down the streets each day, keeping them cleaner than streets in European cities.

Guiding Question

1. Summarize the textbook account of Tenochtitlan.