

Pyramids of Egypt and Mexico: Cultural Diffusion or Parallel Development?

A great historical mystery is the construction of similar pyramids along the Nile River in Ancient Egypt and on the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico by pre-Columbian Mayans. Is this an example of a connection between these civilizations separated by the Atlantic Ocean (cultural diffusion) or of an independent architectural discovery (parallel development) on different continents? Examine the pictures and decide what you think (Photos of the Parthenon, Temple of Zeus and the Canadian Rockies by Alan Singer).



Nile River Valley, Egypt



Chichenitza, Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico

How are the Egyptian and Mayan pyramids similar and different?

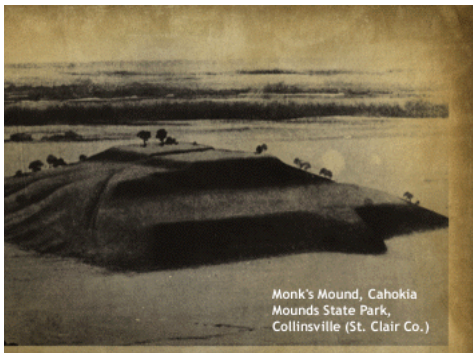


Athens, Greece - Parthenon



Temple of Zeus, Olympia

Temples such as the Parthenon in Athens could not be built as high as pyramids. They were not stable. The weight of the cross pieces was very heavy and the pillars that supported them could topple.



Monk's Mound, Cahokia
Mounds State Park,
Collinsville (St. Clair Co.)

Cahokia National Monument, Illinois



Canadian Rockies

Pyramids may have been built like these mounds along the Mississippi River as protection against seasonal flooding. Another explanation is that people designed pyramids to resemble mountain peaks.