

Y6-Maya Civilisation

Keywords

Who Were the Ancient Maya?

Scholars still have much to learn from the Mayan glyphs and ruins. But they have uncovered enough information for us to answer the question, "Who were the ancient Maya?"

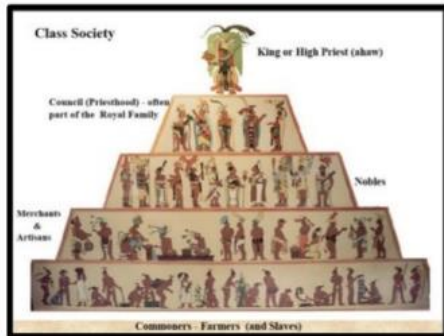
The Maya were one of the great civilizations of the Americas. But there was not one single Maya empire. The Maya were spread among a group of **city-states** that were independent and ruled separately, but shared a common culture. Maya city-states shared similar religious beliefs, social structures, and building styles to other Mesoamerican cultures like the Olmec and Aztec, but each civilization was unique.

MAYAN CALENDARS



MAYAN PEOPLE

The Ancient Maya had a class society. At the top were the nobles and priests. Their middle class was made up of warriors, craftsmen and traders. The farmers, workers and slaves were at the bottom.



MAYAN RELIGION

- The Maya believed in a large number of nature gods. Some gods were considered more important and powerful than others.
- Itzamna - The most important Maya god was Itzamna. He was the god of fire who created the Earth. The Mayan believed that Itzamna gave them the calendar and writing.
- Kukulcan - Kukulcan was a powerful snake god whose name means "feathered serpent". He is often drawn to look like a dragon.
- Bolon Tzucab - Also known by the name Huracan. Bolon Tzucab was the god of storms, wind, and fire.
- Chaac - Chaac was the god of rain and lightning. He had a lightning axe that he used to strike the clouds and produce rain and storms.
- The kings of the Maya served as intermediaries between the people and the god. The priests were responsible for performing rituals to keep the people in the favor of the gods. They were very powerful. One of the rituals was animal and human sacrifices.

- The time keeping system of the Mayans was a combination of cycles, mixing the movements of the Sun, Moon, and Venus.
- Their sacred calendar called the Tzolkin was composed of 260 days: It contained 13 months.
- The second calendar was the civil calendar and consisted of 365 days. It was called the Haab. This calendar consisted of 18 months.

Vocabulary	
archaeologist	someone who studies the past by exploring old remains
architecture	the art of planning, designing and constructing buildings
Chichen Itza	a village in Yucatán state in Mexico: site of important Mayan ruins. A UNESCO World Heritage Site
civilisation	a human society with its own social organisation and culture .
climate	the general weather conditions that are typical of it.
continent	a very large area of land that consists of many countries . South America is a continent .
culture	activities such as the arts and philosophy, which are considered to be important for the development of civilisation
deforestation	if an area is deforested, all the trees there are cut down
deities	a god or goddess
demise	something or someone is their end or death
drought	a long period of time during which no rain falls.
economy	the wealth that a society or country gets from business and industry
erosion	the gradual destruction and removal of rock or soil
fertile	rich in nutrients to support the growth of many plants
hierarchy	a system of organising people into different ranks or levels of importance, for example in society
indigenous	people or things belong to the country in which they are found
human features	features of land that have been impacted by human activity
Mayan	of, relating to, or characteristic of the Maya or any of their languages
merchant	a person who buys or sells goods in large quantities
Mesoamerica	Central America - the countries consist of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Belize; and the western sections of Honduras and Nicaragua, and northern Costa Rica
physical features	natural features of land
plaza	an open square in a city.
polytheists	the worship of or belief in more than one god
society	people in general, thought of as a large organized group
trade	the activity of buying, selling, or exchanging goods or services

The Mayans Significant Dates



Beginnings	Start of Classical Period (CP)	Growth	Drought Period	End of CP	Repercussions of Drought
2000 BCE	250 CE	600 CE	840 CE	900 CE	909 CE
<p>Ceremonial centers were built in modern-day Guatemala and the Yucatan. This marks the very beginnings of the Maya civilization.</p>	<p>Time period of the Mayans largest achievements in culture. Mathematics as well as astronomy were adopted and refined by intellectuals, a writing system was created, architecture was at its most advanced and technology supported complex cities and fertile crops.</p>	<p>Mayan population reached five million or more. This caused resources to be outstripped. Deforestation and erosion of the land ensued, and made the land less fertile.</p>	<p>The area experienced a long term drought, which jump started the downfall of the Maya Civilization. The drought accompanying the erosion of the soil caused crop failure.</p>	<p>End of the classical phase of the Maya Civilization. From this point on, the society never returned to its full glory.</p>	<p>The last date inscribed by Mayans. This year marks the end of the Maya. Due to extended drought periods over the past century as well as famine, epidemics and internal warfare, population steeply declined until the end of the civilization.</p>

The Maya civilization is famous for its architecture. Many cities built large palaces, pyramids, and other public buildings that are still standing today. The buildings were covered with statues to honor their gods and their kings.

MAYAN ARCHITECTURE



What should I already know?

- South America is a **continent**.
- The **climate** of South America is different to that of the UK.
- **Human** and **physical geographical** features of a region in South America.
- Other **civilisations** include the Egyptians and the Greeks.
- What **erosion** is and what impact it can have on land.



Diagrams

Where did the Mayans live?



Famous **Mayan** cities include **Palenque** and **Chichen Itza**, which are found in Mexico.

Mayan Society

- **Mayan** cities had similar layouts to each other. They would have a palace for the ruler, a **plaza** for the marketplaces and temples, in the form of **pyramids**.
- **Mayan** cities were often found near **trade** routes and good farmland.
- Mayans were **polytheists**, believing in many nature gods or **deities**.
- Priests were considered the most important people in the **Mayan culture**. Warriors, craftsmen and **traders** were next in the **hierarchy**. Farmers, workers and slaves were at the bottom of the **hierarchy**.
- **Mayan** merchants **traded** many goods including salt, cotton, honey and jade.
- The **Mayan** calendar (Tzolkin) consisted of 260 days and 13 months.
- The **demise** of the **Mayan** civilisation came about because of a mixture of **deforestation**, land **erosion** and **drought**.

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Historical Skills and Enquiry

- Examine a variety of sources and use these to make inferences about the past - in particular about **Mayan economy, culture, religious beliefs** and **society**.
- Describe how the **Mayan civilisation** has had an impact on modern **society**.
- Examine the timeline of the **Mayan civilisation** and consider where there was rapid change and where there was very little change.. Explain why this may be the case.
- Compare what was happening in the **Mayan civilisation** with what was happening in Britain at the same time.
- Compare the **Mayans** with the Greek and Egyptian **civilisations** using a Venn diagram.
- Describe the ideas, beliefs and attitudes of all groups of people in the **Mayan civilisation**.
- Present what you know about the **Mayans** using a variety of skills (e.g. Geography English, Maths, Computing, etc)
- Use appropriate vocabulary to communicate about the **Mayans**.

Timeline

c. AD 250: By this stage, the **Mayan** had many established cities. They had many monuments, pyramids and devised a writing and maths system.

c. AD 840: The quality of the fields is poor, and this combined with land **erosion**, leads to a **drought**.

Today...there are still 7 million **indigenous Mayan** people living in Central America.

c. AD 600: The **Mayan** population exceeded 5,000,000 people. Excessive farming and **deforestation** due to overflow from the cities were commonplace and this led to land becoming less **fertile**.

c. AD 900: Many **Mayan** cities are deserted due to **deforestation, drought** and war.

Topic: Mayan Civilisation**Year: 6****Strand: Civilisation**

Question 1: What does the word Mesoamerica mean?	Start of unit:	End of unit:
South America		
North America		
Central America		
Argentina		

Question 4: Mayan cities thrived because they were located near...(tick two)	Start of unit:	End of unit:
trade routes		
monuments		
temples		
good farmland		

Question 8: The Mayans traded...(tick two)	Start of unit:	End of unit:
rice		
cacao beans		
salt		
bronze		

Question 2: Place these people in order of where they would appear in Mayan hierarchy (number 1-4)	Start of unit:	End of unit:
warriors		
farmers		
priests		
slaves		

Question 5: Mayan cities were very similar - they usually contained...	Start of unit:	End of unit:
a marketplace		
a palace		
a temple		
a plaza		
all of the above		

Question 9: The Mayans were famous because of their...(tick three)	Start of unit:	End of unit:
architecture		
forests		
early writing and number system		
calendar system		

Question 3: A person who believes in many gods is called...	Start of unit:	End of unit:
an atheist		
a polytheist		
an agnostic		
a druid		

Question 6: The Mayans exchanged goods between cities. This is called...	Start of unit:	End of unit:
buying		
trade		
selling		
stealing		

Question 10: One of the reasons we know about the Maya is because of their codices. These were...	Start of unit:	End of unit:
calendars		
written inscriptions on soft tree bark		
ruins		
temples		

Question 7: Deforestation led to the demise of the Maya people. This is because...	Start of unit:	End of unit:
the land became less fertile		
there was nowhere for the animals to live		
it caused pollution		