

Key vocabulary

Need to know	Nice to know	Super-specialist
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civilisation	cacao beans	codices
drought	maize	codex
priest	scribes	indigenous
temple	glyphs	altitude
pyramid	climate	stelae
jaguar	culture	hieroglyphics
landscape	region	Mesoamerica
rainforest	plateau	dynasty
mountains	city-states	pok-a-tok
astronomers	ceremonies	
mathematicians	ritual	
calendar	obsidian	
zero	jade	



Marvellous Mayans

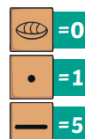


Learning Journey—In history, children will study the history and culture of the Mayan civilisation, including their art and architecture, religion, social structures and accomplishments.

In geography, they will study the countries that Mayans lived in, such as Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and El Salvador. We will learn about features of the physical geography of these countries, such as rainforests, mountains and rivers and explore the human geography by comparing the lives of people in these countries with life in the UK and examining the lives of indigenous peoples.

Maya Numbers

The Maya developed a complex number and counting system that was advanced for their time. They were one of only two cultures in the world to develop the concept of zero.



The Maya people used just three symbols in their number system. These are thought to represent items that the Maya people might have first used to count with, such as pebbles, sticks and shells.

The Maya used a base 20 number system, so after number 19, multiples of 20 were written above the bottom number.



Food

Maize was a very important crop that formed up to 80% of the Maya people's diets. They believed that the first humans were made from **maize** dough by the gods.

The Maya made a bitter chocolatey drink from **cacao beans** that was enjoyed by the rich and used for medicines and in ceremonies.

The beans were highly valued and even used as a form of money.



Summary

The Maya were a civilisation who lived in Mesoamerica (now Central America) between approximately 2000 BCE and 900CE.

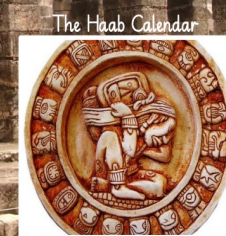
They are known for being the first Mesoamericans to develop writing. They also had a sophisticated culture in which they lived in city states.

They built spectacular monuments and stepped pyramids – some (e.g. Chichen Itza) have become world tourist destinations in the modern day.

They were also well-known for their advanced maths and calendars. Around 900CE, Maya cities became abandoned. No one knows for sure why this happened.



Mayan Hieroglyphs, Copán Ruins



The Haab Calendar



Decorated Drinking Cup



Maya's most famous game is 'Pok-a-Tok'. The game was sometimes used to settle disputes instead of going to war. The ball was controlled by the head, knees and hips.

Timeline

1100 BC Hunter gatherers settle along the Pacific coast.	1100 BC Settlements begin to appear.	700 BC Maya writing is developed	100 BC The first Maya Pyramids are built.	900 -1200 AD El Castillo is built.	250 AD Beginning of the Classic Period.	1000 AD Chichen Itza is the most powerful city.	1502 AD First contact with Europe.
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Links to prior learning:

Geography: Forests and rivers, world maps, crops and farming, land use, irrigation and water use, climate change.

Science: Astronomy, Number systems.

History: Ancient Greece and Rome, Stone age to the iron age, explorers.

RE: Creation myths and stories.

PSHE: Fair Trade, Poverty, Human rights and UNICEF rights of the child.

Online resources

The Mayan Civilisation (School Learning Zone)

Mayans (DK Find Out)

Mayan People (Kiddle)

Maya facts for KS2 Children and Parents (Planbee)

Maya Civilisation (Ducksters)

Maya (Britannica Kids)

Recommended texts:

The History Detective Investigates: Mayan Civilization by Claire Hibbert

The Maya and Chichén Itzá (Time Travel Guides) by Ben Hubbard

The Ancient Maya by Scholastic

Rain Player by David Wisniewski

The Chocolate Tree: A Mayan Folktale by Linda Lowery and Janice Lee Porter.

Popol Vuh by Victor Montejo, Luis Garay & David Unger.

Links to future learning:

Science: Ecology and biology of rainforests, Climate science.

Geography: Heritage and religious sites, Comparison of European and central American countries.

History: Colonisation, Mesopotamia and ancient civilisations,

Religion

The Maya believed in and worshipped a number of different gods. They believed that the gods had a good side and a bad side and that the gods could help or hurt them. The Maya would dance, sing and sometimes make offerings of blood to the gods.

Priests were very important in Maya society as it was believed that they could communicate directly with the gods. They would perform different **rituals** during festivals or special ceremonies in order to appeal to the gods.

The Upperworld and the Underworld

The Maya people believed that the earth, which they called the Middleworld, was large and flat and resting on the back of a creature, such as a turtle or crocodile.

On the Middleworld grew a tree whose branches reached up into the heavens (the Upperworld) and whose roots grew down into Xibalba (the Underworld), which was guarded by gods of death who looked like **jaguars**.

Ordinary Maya people believed that, after they died, their souls would travel through a series of caves and tunnels to Xibalba. Rulers and noblemen believed that they had a chance of getting to the Upperworld.

Places to visit:

The British Museum, London

Cadbury world, Birmingham.

Botanic Gardens Cambridge to learn about rainforest plants.

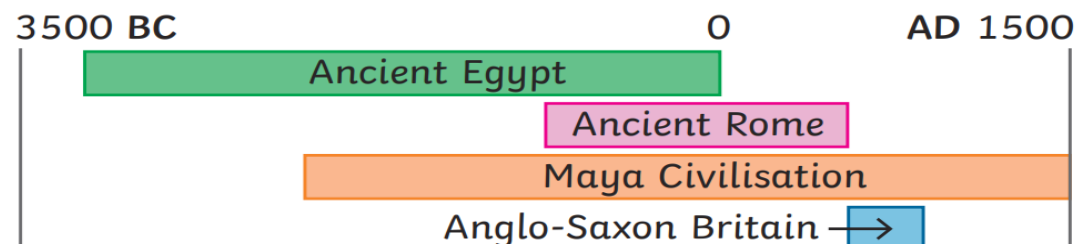


Ancient Maya used masks for a wide variety of reasons. The main material was wood, but other materials include: gold, jade, shell and obsidian!

Event masks were bright and vibrant and were designed on heavenly animals.

Death masks were the most sacred and protected the person into the afterlife.

Timeline



DK
Learning
Mayans
Quiz.