

The Maya were an ancient civilisation in Mesoamerica (Central America) that existed from 2000BC to approximately 1697AD. They were considered an advanced civilisation due to their many achievements.



This map shows the modern countries that the Maya once occupied, as well as the locations of the key Maya cities.

What was daily life like?

Ordinary Maya citizens lived in one room houses built from mud and timber. Men were responsible for providing for their families, women would prepare food and clothes and the children would learn these skills from their parents. Maya people would eat meat as well as their own grown crops, but maize was their staple food. The cacao bean was used to make a drink for the ruling classes.



Overview

- How were the Maya discovered?
- Where did the Maya live?
- What did the Maya eat?
- What did the Maya believe?
- What did the Maya invent?
- How have the Maya affected our lives today?

What does it mean to be sophisticated? (The Ancient Maya)

Language of an historian

Maya	The Maya people were an ancient civilisation of people who lived in an area that used to be known as Mesoamerica.
Civilisation	The society, culture and way of life of a particular area.
Dynasty	A line of hereditary rulers of a country.
Empire	An extensive group of states or countries ruled over by a single monarch.
Temple	A building devoted to the worship of a god or gods.
Agriculture	The practice of farming, including growing crops and rearing animals.
Astronomy	An area of science which focuses on space and the universe as a whole.
Ritual	A religious ceremony involving a series of actions performed in a sequence.

Maya proverbs:

- 'Look at yourself in the mirror to see who you really are.'
- 'You can't store corn in a basket with holes.'
- 'Look first before you act so you don't regret it later.'
- 'Don't talk in circles, tell the truth.'

Language of a geographer

City state	A city that forms an independent state.
Mesoamerica	A historical region and culture in southern North America and most of Central America.
Drought	A prolonged period of low rainfall leading to a shortage of water.
Settlement	A place where people establish a community.
Kingdom	A country, state or territory ruled by a king or queen.
Landscape	All the visible features of an area of land.
Climate	The weather conditions in an area over a long period.

What did the Ancient Maya believe?

Religion was very important to the Ancient Maya, evidenced by their impressive temples. The Ancient Maya worshipped their kings like they were gods but they also worshipped their ancestors and a range of different gods and goddesses.

Fun facts

- The Ancient Maya believed that the King was closely linked to the gods.
- The Maya invented the number zero!
- No one knows for sure why the Maya civilisation declined but possible explanations include drought, war or disease.
- The Maya made books called codices out of paper bark.
- The Maya pyramid at Chichen-Itza has 365 steps.

Inventions

 The number 0! Maya was one of very few civilisations to discover the idea of 0 in counting.	 Hot Chocolate! Using cacao beans, Ancient Maya made a hot drink. It was bitter though.
 A Calendar! Ancient Maya invented a calendar up to 2012!	 Writing! Maya used hieroglyphs to communicate ideas.

Things to try at home

- Make your own Maya temple
- Find out where the Mayans lived on a map
- Write a newspaper about discovering an Ancient Maya artefact
- Research Maya numbers and compare them to our numbers.

Key questions to ask yourself

- Why is it important to learn about the past?
- How do the Maya compare to our lives?
- What have the Maya invented that we still use today?

Timeline



2000BC Civilisations first begin to emerge.	1100BC The hunter-gatherers begin to settle on the Pacific Coast.	800BC Farming begins and a basic trade system develops.	700BC Maya writing begins developing.	100BC The first pyramids/temples are built and cities begin forming around them.	250AD The Classic Era begins. Astronomy, mathematics and architecture are all developing.	800-925AD Chichen Itza becomes the most powerful city.	1000AD The Maya civilisation begins to decline and leave the cities. In the 1500s, the Spanish begin to colonise here.
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