

Maya Civilization



St. Mary's Church of England Primary School and Nursery



Be the BEST you can be

Timeline

1100 B.C.	800 B.C.	400 B.C.	300 B.C.	100 B.C.	600	800	900	1502
The first hunter-gatherers settle on the pacific coast	Village farming and trade become established	First solar calendars invented	Cities become centres for trade and Kings begin to rule	First pyramids are built	Cities start expanding quickly	Building of stepped pyramid of Chichen-Itza	Decline of Mayan cities	First contact with Europeans is made

Key Vocabulary

Astronomy	The Mayans were able to predict solar eclipses and used observatories and shadow-casting devices.
Calendar	These were circular and charted the movements of the sun, moon, stars and planets, with 365 days in a year.
Hieroglyphs	They used about 800 symbols to create writing, often on folded pages forming a book (codex).
Kings/Queens	The King/Queen was thought to be given the right to rule by the gods. Each city had a palace for them.
Maize	The staple food of the Mayans which was so important that they even had a maize god.
Numbers	Using a base 20 system (we use base 10), they used dots and bars to create numbers and had a symbol for zero.
Pok-a-tok	A game where large rubber balls were aimed at stone hoops. Losers were sometimes sacrificed to the gods!
Pyramids	Built with a temple at the top to give sacrifices to the gods, others were built for the gods themselves.
Sacrifice	Humans and animals were used as a blood offering to gods, mostly war prisoners by decapitation or heart removal.
Stelae	Stone monuments glorifying Kings and record his deeds.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Mayans tied boards to their babies' heads to produce a flat forehead. They also tried to make their babies cross-eyed! Big noses were also considered beautiful.

General Knowledge

Foods

The Maya people mainly ate maize (corn). Maize was very important to them as 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. It was used for medicines and in ceremonies. The cacao beans were highly valued and even used as a form of money.

Religion

The Maya believed in many gods and goddesses. They thought that the gods/goddesses had a good side and a bad side and that they could help or hurt them.

Writing system

The Maya writing system was used to write several different Maya languages. It was made up of many symbols called glyphs. Logograms are glyphs representing whole words.



Famous Figures

Maya Gods

Some were in human form, others in animal but the most supreme god was Itzamna, the creator god, lord of day and night and ruler of the heavens. Many looked after the weather or crops such as Chac, the rain god and Kinich-Ahau the sun god. Priests would perform ceremonies (including sacrifices) to please them and Kings were thought to turn into gods after they died. They believed the world was divided into three parts (Heaven, Earth and the Underworld), linked together by a giant world tree.