

History – The Mayans

Essential Question: Were the Mayans a civilized society? Thread – Field to Fork

What I should already know: I have studied other ancient civilizations that had many gods, such as the Ancient Greeks and Ancient Egyptians. I understand the difference between primary and secondary sources.

Enquiry Questions:

- Who were the Maya people and where did they live?
- How do we know about the Mayans and how reliable are the sources?
- Who were Yumil Kaxob, Chac and Kinich Ahau and why were they so important to the Mayans?
- What did the Mayans eat and why were certain foods particularly significant?
- How did the Mayans farm?

Key Vocabulary

Blood letting – The Mayan ritual of cutting or piercing somebody's body as a way of communicating with the gods or asking them for help.

Cacao beans – Cacao trees spout pods directly from their trunks. When they are ripe, the pods can be broken open to reveal the beans, which can then be dried, roasted or ground.

Camera lucida – A device used as a drawing aid by artists. It allows an artist to trace an image to make a drawing, painting or print from it.

Civilization – A human society with well-developed rules and government, often where technology and the arts are considered important.

Crop rotation – The practice of planting different crops each year on the same plot of land to improve soil health, optimize nutrients in the soil, and prevent pests and weeds.

Drought – A long period of time with little or no rain.

Evidence – Something that gives proof or a reason to believe.

Idol – A statue or image of a god that is used as an object of worship.

Irrigation channels – Passages dug to bring water to plants.

Lithography – The art or process of printing using a smooth stone or metal plate treated so that only the areas meant to print will absorb and transfer ink.

Maize – Another word for sweetcorn or corn on the cob. It can be made into a dough and baked into tortillas.

Mesoamerica – An area of Central America incorporating the modern-day countries of Guatemala, southern Mexico, northern Belize and western Honduras.

Primary source – A source of evidence that comes from the time being studied or from a person who was involved in the events being studied.

Ritual – A set form for going through the steps of a religious ceremony.

Sacrifice – The gift of something to a god as an act of worship.

Secondary source – Does not give original information. It interprets or summarises information from primary sources. Textbooks, biographies, encyclopedias and dictionaries are usually secondary sources.

Slash and burn technique – Mayan farming technique. Jungle areas were chopped down and burnt. The ash is good for the soil so it was perfect for growing crops. Within a few years, the nutrients would be used up and the farmers would have to move elsewhere to let the forest regrow.

Historical Skills

Pupils will:

- Develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of world history, establishing clear narratives within and across the period studied.
- Note connections, contrasts and trends over time and develop the appropriate use of historical terms.
- Address, and sometimes devise, historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance.
- Construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information.
- Understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources and that different versions of past events may exist, giving some reasons for this.

Timeline

c. 2000 BC – The Maya civilization comes into being in Central America.

c. 300 BC – Cities, such as El Mirador, become large and powerful.

AD 900 – Cities in the rainforest are abandoned due to a drought. People move north to the highlands of Guatemala and the Yucatán.

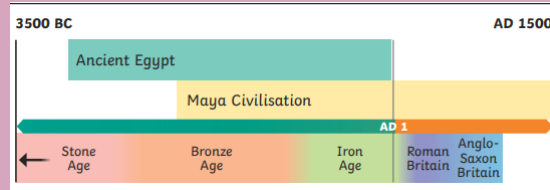
AD 1000 – Cities like Chichén Itzá (which has two temple pyramids) are still thriving.

AD 1500s – The Spanish arrive in South America and set out to destroy the remaining elements of Maya civilization as part of their conquest.

AD 1839 – American explorer and writer, John Lloyd Stephens, and British artist, Frederick Catherwood, explore Copán and other cities including Chichén Itzá, reigniting interest in the Maya civilization.

AD 2014 – The cities of Lagunita and Tamchén are rediscovered.

What was happening elsewhere in the world?



The Maya Civilization began during the time of the Ancient Egyptians.

In Britain, this was the Bronze Age.

By the time the last of the Maya Civilization was destroyed, in the 1500s, the Tudors were ruling Britain.

What came after

- After the Mayans came the Olmecs, who also settled Mexico. They didn't build any major cities but they were widespread and prosperous.
- They were followed by the Inca, in modern-day Peru, and finally the Aztecs, also in modern-day Mexico.



A map of the Maya civilization



Maize



Mayans farming using irrigation channels

Links to other curriculum areas: