

Curriculum Intent:

History Children will gain clear knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world, exploring significant events in history as well as acknowledging how these have impacted on society today.



Subject	Term	Unit
History	Autumn 2	The Mayans

Prior KS2 knowledge Building on knowledge and skills	National Curriculum Focus
Year 3 History – Stone Age to Iron Age Year 3 History – Greeks Year 4 History- Ancient Egyptians	Primary Curriculum – History: Pupils will understand the achievements of the earliest civilisations in a non-European society that provides contrasts with British history. Looking at events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally. Take a closer look at a non-European society that provides contrast with British history - Mayan civilizations c.AD 900.

What?	The development of the Maya civilisation and its legacies. Comparing how ancient humans adapted to their environment and created civilizations that were in tune with their surroundings. This is a non European society, which contrasts with British history.
Why?	To compare and understand how ancient civilisations differ to British history and how they have impacted on society today. To understand what we have taken from their cultural developments and why.
How?	Through a range of artefacts and tools to discover how the ancient Maya people created their civilisation in comparison to British history.

Key vocabulary			
Priest	Held regular rituals surrounding the temple, possibly including sacrifices.	Ahau or Ahaw	The main king or lord of a Maya city-state.
Pharmacist	Provided natural medicines which kept the people very healthy.	Batab	A lesser lord, usually ruling over a small town.

Farmer	Irrigated fields and provided food for the city.	Cacao	Seeds that the Maya used to make chocolate.
Astronomy	Very accurate charts of the moon.	Cenote	A sinkhole or pit filled with water, cenotes were sources of water for the Maya and were also used as places of sacrifice.
Codices	Ancient writing collected in the form of a book. The word codices is the plural of codex.	Mesoamerican	The area on the continent of North America that is made up of what is known as Mexico and Central America today.
Conquistador	A group of Spanish people, led by Hernan Cortes, who conquered the Mayans and Aztecs in 1519.	Aztecs	A Mesoamerican civilisation that existed in the second millennium AD.
Culture	The ideas, customs and behaviour of a civilisation. Mayan culture used ideas from many sources.		

Key Questions

1. When was the Mayan era and where were they located?
2. How were Maya cities structured?
3. How did each city-state support itself?
4. What were the key beliefs of the classical Mayan civilisation?
5. In what ways did the Mayans advance their culture?
6. How did the Mayans use maths and astronomy to support their civilisation?
7. How and why did the Maya classical period end?
8. How different was the Mayan civilisation to early British civilisation?

Key learning: (Specific link to the NC here)

Objective	Learning
Can I explain when and where the Mayans lived?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School timeline: Compare time to prior learning : Stone Age to Iron Age, the Ancient Greeks and Ancient Egyptians. Class time line showing world history – what was happening elsewhere in the world at this time? Find South Eastern part of Mexico on the world map In 2000BC, the Maya civilization emerged and took over most of Central America and the south-eastern part of Mexico. The main period of Mayan civilization was known as the 'classical' period.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. 100BCE First city states appear, and hierarchy emerges. c. 300CE Mayan settlements become centres for trade across the region. Goods such as stone and chocolate are traded with neighbouring city states. c. 600CE Mayan settlements support an increasing population, growing at a fast rate due to plentiful food supply. c. 650CE Caracol, one of the main Mayan cities is increasingly populated and expands over a large area becoming an important centre. A Maya city from the Classic Period usually consisted of a series of stepped platforms topped by masonry structures, ranging from great temple-pyramids and palaces to individual house mounds. These

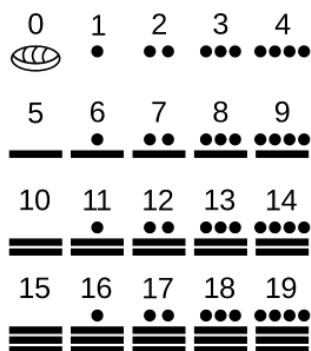
	<p>structures were in turn arranged around broad plazas or courtyards. Maya cities were rarely laid out in neat grids, and appear to have developed in an unplanned fashion, with temples and palaces torn down and rebuilt over and over through the centuries. Because of this seemingly erratic pattern of settlement, the boundaries of Maya cities are often hard to determine. Some cities were surrounded by a moat, and some had defensive earthworks around them; however, this was unusual.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Deepen the thinking . How does this compare to Stone Age to Iron Age houses and villages?</u>
Can I explain how each city-state supported itself?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c. 250CE The 'classical' period begins, urbanisation begins - city states began to take over smaller neighbouring cities. <p>Raised field farming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Maya used this method to farm areas of land that otherwise would have been too wet to use. Small canals were created by digging out soil from beneath the water and piling up to create small islands. Maya farmers could then grow crops on these islands while they harvested the fish that swam in the canals. Raised fields connected by canals can be seen today in aerial photographs. <p>Terrace farming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is where walls are built to make small flat fields one on top of the other. It was useful for increasing the amount of farmland in mountain areas. Most terraces were small, but in some parts of the Maya lowlands, they dramatically transformed entire regions! <p>Shifting cultivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also known as 'swidden' or 'slash and burn' this is when jungle areas are 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. <p>Deepen the thinking . Compare to previous civilizations studied in Y3 and Y4 . How was the farming economy the same or different?</p>
Can I describe the beliefs of the Mayans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Maya were polytheistic. That means that they believed in many gods. Maya gods were greatly the gods of nature, including the gods of the sun and of Venus and the Maize god (maize, or corn, was their most important crop). Their religious practices included festivals and rituals to honor their gods. Maya priests had a hand in controlling nearly everything in Maya daily life. They decided when to plant crops, when to marry, and whom to sacrifice. The Maya viewed all of nature as sacred. • They practiced a belief system called animism. Animism is the belief that objects, places and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence, or soul. For the Maya, all things - animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork and perhaps even words - were alive. From the multitude of spiritual forces alive in their world, every Maya had their own spiritual guide, a <i>Wayob</i>. In order to help a person through life, an individual's Wayob might appear to them as an animal or in a dream to offer guidance. <p>Deepen the thinking . How are the beliefs of the Ancient Greeks and Ancient Egyptians same or different from the Mayans?</p>

Can I explain how the Mayans advanced their culture?

- Mayans created their own writing and number systems, which they used in their books to pass on information from generation to generation.
- Their writing is a logo syllabic system in which some signs called [logograms](#) represent words or ideas (like “shield” or “jaguar”), while other signs called [syllabograms \(or phonograms\)](#) represent sounds in the form of single syllables (like “pa”, “ma”). Only the elites could write and so you can imagine that writing concerned elite activities – the calendar and life histories of rulers, such as their birth, death, marriage, warfare and conquests.

Deepen the moment – Which other civilizations or historical periods used a form of writing . How is it same or different to the Mayans?

Can I explain how the Mayans used maths to support their civilisation?



- Mayans were among the few ancient civilisations who were able to not only devise an advanced numbering system but also had a concept of zero. The concept of zero is an integral part of a complete mathematical system. It is a unique factor in the historical development of mathematics in different civilisations. Most ancient civilisations simply didn't have a concept of zero and consequently, didn't use it. Mayans were unique in that they were able to understand the notion of zero fairly early on and formulated a symbol to denote it. An empty shell was used to denote zero in Mayan numerical system. This enabled the Mayans to have an elaborate mathematical system. The chief use to which the Mayan put their mathematical system was in observing astronomical bodies and in maintaining records of their movements.

Can I explain how the Mayans used astronomy to support their civilisation?



- Time was extremely important to the Maya, they made elaborate and accurate calendars and used them in charting the movements of the sun, moon, stars and even planets.
- These calendars served a variety of purposes both practical and [sacred](#). They were used in astronomical [calculations](#), recording important events, the reigns of rulers and their conquests and also in [divination](#). In the late 19th century, [Ernst Forstemann](#) worked out how the Maya marked time. The Maya used what is now known as the calendar round which is made up of 3 interlocking cycles. A cycle of 20 names, a cycle of 13 numbers (which forms the 260-day sacred calendar) and a 365 days solar year. 52 years will pass until the three cycles line up again. They used their charting of the calendars to support their farming techniques, so they knew when to plant crops and when to harvest.

Can I explain how the Mayan classical time ended ?

- c. **900CE** Mayan centres become less important, perhaps because of a widespread drought, but no clear reason has yet emerged.
- **1500CE** Ships with Spanish explorers arrive. They brought diseases with them which killed many Mayans.
- **1519CE** Hernan Cortes - A Spanish explorer. Conquered the Mayans and began to remove Mayan culture.

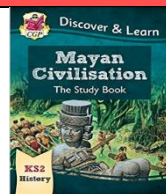
Websites

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zq6svcw>

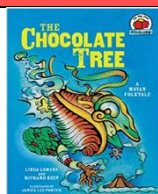
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maya-people>

<https://www.mayaarchaeologist.co.uk/school-resources/maya-world/maya-writing-system/>

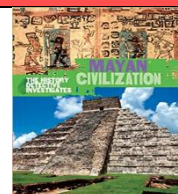
Recommended Reads



KS2 History Discover & Learn: Mayan Civilisation Study Book
(CGP KS2 History)



Chocolate Tree:
A Mayan Folktale
by Linda Lowrey



Mayan Civilization
by Clare Hibbert

Golden Thread

How individuals/events in history have changed our national and personal lives, both locally and nationally.

Experience Day (Trip / visitor)

Cadbury World: The Maya Educational Talk

- Themed education at Cadbury World. Great city of Chichen Itza and understanding the Mayan myths/legends that claimed how humans were created.
- Real cocoa pods filled with the cocoa beans that were so valuable to Mayans in c. AD 900, and the wooden whisk they used to make their favourite chocolate drink. Lucky pupils can even have the chance to dress as a Mayan!
- The Maya played possibly the first team sport in human history, connecting and contrasting their lives to ours today. The presentation also features video and audio to enhance your experience, and is available for either individual or multiple classes of up to 100 students.