

# In the Past

## The Mayans

W/C: 29th June 2020



The Maya lived in central America in 2000 BC and developed a sophisticated culture of city states with fine monumental buildings and stepped pyramids. The Maya were advanced in their use of mathematics and renowned for the accuracy of their calendar.

Subject: History/Reading

Activity Outcome: Read the two pages of information which gives you a summary of the Maya before answering the questions to summarise your findings.

Explain: The Maya civilisation extended from what is now South East Mexico through Central America. Watch this video clip <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks2-introducing-the-maya-civilisation/znk3cqqt> to give you an overview of the Maya. You can also find a selection of videos here <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zq6svcw> to give you more information on their lifestyle.

Subject: P.E

Activity Outcome: Play a game of Pok-A-Tok if possible. Watch the video on page 5 and read the instructions before playing. If you do not have someone else to play with, you could draw what the game would look like.

Explain: Pok-A-Tok is a fast-paced ball game played by the Maya. Pok-A-Tok was played in teams of one or two players in every major Mayan city. If there were two players in a team, they assisted each other. The objective of the game was to get a ball through a narrow stone hoop placed on the court wall, often as high up as 20 feet from the ground. Players were not allowed to use their hands or feet—only their head, shoulders, elbows, wrists, and hips.

Subject: R.E

Activity Outcome: Create a fact file based on the information you have found out. You must choose your favourite god and write all you know about them, in your own words.

Explain: 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 they could help or hurt them. The Maya would dance, sing and sometimes make offerings of blood to the gods to demonstrate their respect and loyalty. Find out more on pages 6 & 7.

Subject: Geography

Activity Outcome: Your challenge is to create a 'Welcome to the Maya Area' tourist information page.

You can use maps and pictures on your page too.

Explain: Today, the area the Maya used to live in spreads over 5 countries: Mexico (southern Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula), Belize, Guatemala, a small area of west Honduras and the very north of El Salvador.

Read the following text and then answer the questions on page 4.

I have included the answers so you can mark them afterwards.

# WHO WERE THE MAYA?

**T**he Maya were people who lived in the forests of Central America. Their civilization was at its height from around 250 until 900 CE. During this time, which is known as the Classic period, the Maya established powerful city-states. Their society was complex, and the people had organized religion, writing and impressive architecture.

The Maya's ancestors had crossed to North America from Asia more than 20,000 years ago and then gradually moved south. They reached Central America about 12,000 years ago. Between 5000 and 2000 BCE, the Maya changed their lifestyle. They went from living as hunters on the move to settling down in villages, as farmers.

Historians call the period in Mayan history from 2000 BCE to 250 CE the Preclassic. During this time, the Maya developed complex religious beliefs and erected monumental temples. They came up with their system of writing and built their first cities. El Mirador was inhabited from the 500s BCE and may have had over 100,000 inhabitants. It contains one of the earliest and largest Mayan **pyramids**: known as the La Danta temple, it stands 70 m (230 ft) high. Tikal was also founded in the Preclassic period, although the city was most powerful in the 700s CE. Like other **city-states** of the Classic period, Tikal was ruled by a **dynasty** of kings.

**These are the ruins of Tikal in Guatemala. Its population may have reached 90,000, with nearly half a million more living in the surrounding area.**

## DETECTIVE WORK

Visit <http://mayas.mrdoon.org/games.html> for interactive games about Mayan civilization.

David Stuart, an expert in Mayan hieroglyphics, describes visiting Tikal:

*'It's the atmosphere of the place. Tikal is simply one of the most overpowering archaeological sites in the world.'*







Mayan lands included much of modern-day Mexico and Guatemala, all of Belize, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador.

▼ This plaque of a Mayan king was discovered at Teotihuacán. It proves that there was contact between the Teotihuacáns and the Maya.



Around 900 CE, Tikal, Copán, Palenque and the other great Mayan cities were abandoned. **Archaeologists** are still not entirely sure why, although there are many theories. Nevertheless, Mayan culture continued in the Postclassic period (900-1500 CE) in the uplands of the Yucatán in Mexico, for example at Uxmal and Chichén Itzá.

The region where the Maya and others developed advanced civilizations is called **Mesoamerica**. Peoples included the Olmecs, Teotihuacáns and Aztecs. Further south, in the Andes of Peru, the Incas established a mighty but short-lived empire. All of these cultures came to an end with the arrival of Spanish explorers in the 1500s (see pages 26-27).

**Several civilizations rose and fell in Mesoamerica at the same time as the Maya.**



What is unusual about the ear of the king on the jade plaque?

People	Flourished	Key centres
Olmecs	1500-300 BCE	San Lorenzo, La Venta
Teotihuacáns	200 BCE-700 CE	Teotihuacán
Zapotecs	1500 BCE-700 CE	Monte Albán
Mixtecs	900-1450 CE	Tilantongo, Monte Albán
Toltecs	900-1200 CE	Tula, Chichén Itzá
Aztecs	1325-1521 CE	Tenochtitlán

Now, answer the 10 questions on the following page.

1. What region did the Maya live in?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Look at paragraph one. List three things they organised.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What occupation did the Maya have when they were living in villages?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Where can the La Danta temple be found?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. When was Tikal most powerful and who ruled it?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Where are the ruins of Tikal situated?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. True or false – People left Copan empty around 900 CE?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Where were advanced civilizations developed?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. True or false – The Incas had a long-lasting empire?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Why did the cultures discussed come to an end?  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. Central America
2. religion, writing and impressive architecture
3. They were farmers.
4. El Mirador
5. It was most powerful in 700s CE. It was ruled by a dynasty of kings.
6. Guatemala
7. True
8. Mesoamerica
9. False
10. They came to an end due to the arrival of Spanish explorers.

Watch this video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=62&v=jKvQjgC9sIY&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=62&v=jKvQjgC9sIY&feature=emb_logo) to see what a quick game looks like.

### **Instructions**

You can do this alone or in teams. You will need two pieces of paper, a pen, tape, a ball.

1. Draw a circle about 5 inches in diameter onto each piece of paper. If you are playing by yourself, you will only need one piece of paper.
2. Tape or tack a piece of paper on opposite walls slightly above your head to start. The higher the target, the more challenging the game will be.
3. Divide into two equal teams and choose your targets. Working as a team, try to hit the center of the circle on your team's target with the rubber ball without using your hands. The other team will try to take the ball away from you to hit their target, but they also cannot use their hands.
4. The first team to hit the target wins a point. When both teams have scored a point on their target, move the target higher. Or make the game more challenging by only using your feet, legs, and head. Imagine trying to play Pok-A-Tok like the Maya did, with a heavy rubber ball and a 30-foot-high ring—and remember the penalty for losing in ancient Mayan culture was death!

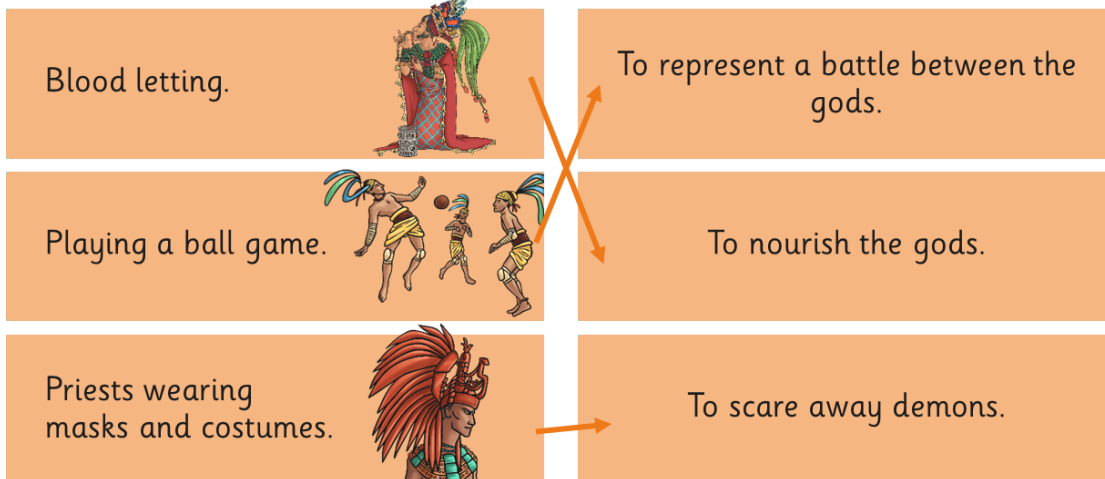


Religion was an integral part of the ancient Maya culture, intertwined with all other aspects of society.

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 they could help or hurt them. The Maya would dance, sing and sometimes make offerings of blood to the gods to demonstrate their respect and loyalty.



The Maya people performed many different religious rituals. These rituals were often performed during festivals or special ceremonies and they were a way of appealing to the gods. Below is a few rituals Mayans believed in and their reason behind them. What do you think about them?



Stone carvings show rulers and nobles giving blood sacrifices.



The Maya believed that the gods gave their own blood to create humans, so on special occasions the rulers would return the favour by offering their blood to the gods.

This lintel shows Shield Jaguar, the warrior king of Yaxchilan, standing over his wife, Lady Xook, holding an enormous flaming torch. Lady Xook is pulling a thorn-studded rope through her tongue in an act of blood letting to honour the gods.





During festivals, the priests would dance, sing, bang drums and make lots of noise on the steps of the temples while wearing brightly coloured clothing and headdresses containing the feathers of exotic birds. This ritual dance was thought to scare away demons and demonstrate the priest's power and authority to the gods.



The Maya people believed that the earth, which they called the Middle-world, was large and flat and resting on the back of a creature (like a turtle or crocodile).

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



The Maya believed that after they died, their souls would travel through a series of caves and tunnels to Xibalba (which means 'place of fear') but the rulers and noblemen believed there was a chance of them getting to the Upperworld.



The Maya people worshipped a number of different gods, many of whom had overlapping roles and names. Some had human form, some took the form of an animal and some were a phenomena of nature.

Historians have discovered a lot about the Maya gods from carvings and

### Itzamna

One of the creator gods.

Inventor of writing.

Patron of learning.

Portrayed in human form as an old man with no teeth and a large nose.



### Ix Chel

Wife of Itzamna.

Goddess of childbirth, healing, weaving and the Moon.

Portrayed in human form wearing a headdress of snakes entangled in her hair, and toes and fingers that looked like jaguar claws.

Capable of causing floods and destruction.

The mother of many gods.



### Maize God

From his head sprouted an ear of maize.

Was important because the diet of the Maya was 80% maize and they relied on the harvest being successful.

Also important because humans were created from maize dough by the gods.



### Chac

Brought the rain needed to make crops grow.

Created storms, thunder and lightning.

Caused wars and human sacrifice.

Portrayed as a human with a curling snout and reptile fangs.



## Kimi

Death god.

Portrayed as a human with a skeletal nose, jaw and spine along with a body covered in hideous spots.



### Your Task

Create a fact file based on the information you have found out. You must choose your favourite god and write all you know about them, in your own words. You should think about:

**Name**

**Meaning of name**

**Appearance**

**Interesting facts**



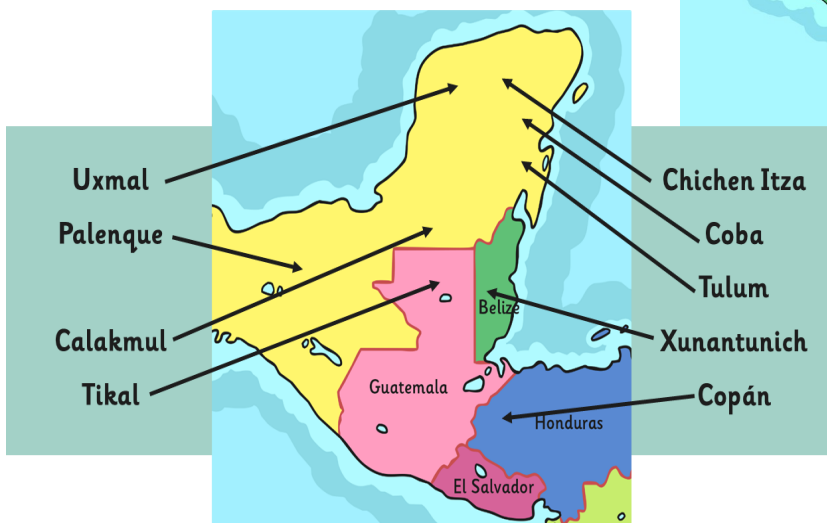
Today, the area the Maya used to live in spreads over 5 countries: Mexico (southern Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula), Belize,



This is in Central America, it consists of seven countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

Mesoamerica refers to an area where a number of societies had been formed before the Spanish

arrived in the 16th century. It covers Mexico and the northern parts of Central America. 'Mesoamerica' can also refer to the culture of the people who lived there. The Maya lived in the south east of this



### Your Task

Your challenge is to create a 'Welcome to the Maya Area' tourist information page.

The page must include details which answer the following questions:

1. Who were the ancient Maya people? Use your history from lesson one to help you.
2. Where in the world did they live?
3. What is special about the ancient Maya people?

You can use maps and pictures on your page too.