

Year 5 World History: Ancient Maya

Key Learning

The Maya lived in an area known as Mesoamerica, which is a term used to describe Mexico and other parts of Central America before they were invaded by Spain in the 1500s.



City

- The Maya built many cities in the middle of rainforests.
- Each city had its own king or queen to rule it. The ruler would have lived in a large palace.
- The Maya would also have ball courts where they could play pok-ta-pok. This game was not just played for fun but also to please their gods or to settle conflicts.
- Cities had marketplaces where the Maya would trade goods.
- They also built large pyramids, which were topped with a small platform or shelter. These pyramids were used as landmarks as well as burial sites.

States

Housing



- The houses of the Maya were called 'nahs'.
- They usually only had one room and were made out of mud (or stone if you were wealthy).
- Their roofs were thatched using hay or large leaves, which prevented the rain from entering.

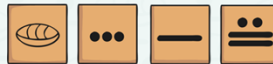
Number system

The Maya and Numbers

The Maya had a good understanding of numbers and they developed a complex number and counting system which was advanced for their time.

They were one of only two cultures in the world to develop the concept of zero and this allowed them to develop a place value system where a zero could act as a place holder in large numbers. This enabled the Maya people to distinguish between numbers like 23 and 203, where the placement of the zero determines the value of the digit 2 as 200. This is a very important concept which many civilisations did not understand until much later than the Maya.

The Maya people used symbols to represent their numbers. Let's have a look at how it worked.



Gods and Goddesses

A Central Belief System

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.



Religious Rituals



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.

Key Vocabulary

City state	A <i>city-state</i> is an independent sovereign city which serves as the centre of political, economic, and cultural life.
Glyphs	Maya script, also known as <i>Maya glyphs</i> , is historically the native writing system of the Maya civilization of Mesoamerica
Primary Resource	Something that gives original information. It comes from a time being studied or from a person who was involved in the events being studied. These can include: photos, artefacts, speeches, diaries, letters, videos, audio
Secondary Resource	When someone else produces work using a primary resource. Eg documentary, information book, the internet. They were not produced at the time studied.
Timeline	Historical timelines show the significant historical events and developments for a specific topic, over the course of centuries.

Significant People/Places



Chichen Itza is a well known city state which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Maize God - Yumil Kaxob
God of agriculture/flora and associated with the Maize God.



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 area.