

History Knowledge Organiser: Year 6 - Maya

Prior Knowledge

Pupils will have a secure grounding in their knowledge of the terminology 'artefact', 'primary sources' and 'secondary sources' and understand how these forms of information provide knowledge regarding the past. Pupils will understand the term 'prehistory', the basic chronology of Stone Age Britain and how that developed and moved into the Bronze and Iron Age. From their Geography topic, the pupils will understand that South America is a continent, the climate of South America is different to that of the UK and that therefore, their everyday life and resources will differ from other continents. Pupils will have a secure understanding of the key societal, cultural and religious features of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Pupils should utilise this knowledge to develop and contribute to their chronological knowledge of ancient history and draw historically valid conclusions regarding the similarities and differences between these ancient civilisations.

Diagrams



Famous Mayan cities include Palenque and Chichen Itza, which are found in Mexico.



Vocabulary

Archaeologist: someone who studies the past through remains and objects.
Archaeology: the study of objects and material remains and how they impact human culture.
Architecture: the art or practice of designing buildings or monuments.
Chichen Itza: a village in the Yucatan state of Mexico. It is a site of historical and archaeological importance in Mayan academia and is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.
City-state: a political system where an independent city, ruled by a sovereign or other ruler, serves the centre of a political, economic and cultural life over its surrounding area.
Civilisation: a human society with its own political organisation and culture.
Climate: the general weather conditions that are typical of a certain place.
Continent: a very large area of land that consists of many countries. South America is a continent.
Culture: activities such as the arts and philosophy, which are considered to be a defining and important feature for the development of civilisation.
Deforestation: if an area is deforested, all the trees are demolished.
Deity: a god or higher being.
Drought: a period of abnormally low rainfall, leading to a shortage of water.
Yax Mutal: Also known as Tikal, it is one of the largest archaeological sites and urban centres of the pre-Columbian Maya civilization.

Intended Unit Outcomes

By the end of the unit, pupils will:

- Understand the societal structure and political organisation of Maya (city-states with ruling sovereigns).
- Recognise the geographical placement of Maya (near trade routes and good farmland) and create conclusions on how this may have benefitted their economy and lifestyle.
- Understand the importance of religious rituals for Mayans.
- Understand the religious beliefs of Maya civilisation, and how that had a direct impact on their art and societal structure.
- Have a secure understanding of the societal roles of each individual in Maya, and how this changed depending on an individual's wealth and lineage.
- Identify and use the Mayan number system.
- Have a secure understanding of the trading practices in ancient Maya. Mayan merchants traded many goods including salt, cotton, honey and jade.
- Know that the Mayan calendar (Tzolkin) consisted of 260 days and 13 months.
- Recognise the key theories regarding the demise of the Mayan civilisation (deforestation, land erosion and drought.) and will have engaged in historical debates on which theory they believe is the most likely.
- Recognise the key components of Mayan art and its inextricable link with their religion and mythology.
- Understand how we study the past and the available evidence that remains of Maya.
- Recognise the importance of corn and cacao bean production in ancient Maya.

Sources and Artefacts

Pupils will study crucial monuments, art, commemorative monuments, the acropolises at Tikal and Palenque, the Maya calendar, hieroglyphs and pottery, as this will provide a greater understanding of the civilisation and create a picture of what daily life may have looked like. The use of artefacts will help to stimulate historical discussions regarding the complexity and nature of the sources that remain of Maya. It will also provide a direct insight into how art and religion were inextricably linked.

Historical investigation and enquiry skills

Pupils, with support from their teacher, will examine a variety of sources and use these to make inferences about the past, in particular about the Maya economy, culture, religious beliefs and societal structure. Pupils will be encouraged to select the information provided to them to devise historically valid statements, such as how the Mayan civilisation has had an impact on modern society. The pupils will examine the timeline of the Mayan civilisation and consider where there was rapid change and where there was very little change and discuss why this may be the case. Use 'meanwhile, elsewhere' phrase to compare Maya with Britain in this period. Compare the Mayans with the Greek and Egyptian civilisations. Can the pupils find contrasts and similarities (for example, the similarity in the city-state organisation of the Greeks, but different from both with the presence of kings in each city).

Timeline/Chronology

1200- 1100 BC: Olmec civilisation.
1100 BC: The first hunter gatherers settle along the Pacific Coast and then expand into the central highlands.
800 BC: Village farming, and trade established throughout the Maya region.
400 BC: Earliest solar calendars are carved in stone.
300 BC: The social structure in Maya adapts to include nobles and kings as rulers in the independent city-states.
100 BC: The first pyramids are built.
250 AD: The Mayan have now established many cities, monuments, pyramids and devised a writing and maths system.
450 AD: The city-state of Tikal dominates the tropical lowland of the central region.
600 AD: The Mayan population exceeded 5,000,000 people. Excessive farming and deforestation occur due to overflow from the cities.
683 AD: Pakal the Great of Palenque dies and is buried in the Temple of Inscriptions.
800 AD: Sites in the rainforests and tropical lowlands are abandoned whilst northern lowland sites flourish.
840 AD: The quality of the fields is poor, and this combined with land erosion, leads to drought.
900 AD: Many Mayan cities are destroyed due to deforestation, drought and war.
1502 AD: First contact with Europeans made.

MAYA TIMELINE

Olmec	1200-1000 BCE
Early Preclassic Maya	1800-900 BCE
Middle Preclassic Maya	900-300 BCE
Late Preclassic Maya	300 BCE - CE 250
Early Classic Maya	250-600 CE
Late Classic Maya	600-900 CE
Post Classic Maya	900-1500 CE
Colonial period	1500-1800 CE
Independent Mexico	1821 to the present