



Year 6 History Knowledge Organiser Summer Term 2023

This term, in History, we will learn who the ancient Maya people were and where and when they lived. They will use maps and atlases to locate Maya cities and identify countries in Mesoamerica. In addition to this we will learn about the religious beliefs and rituals of the ancient Maya people and find out more about some of the many gods they worshipped. We will also learn about the types of food eaten by the ancient Maya people and they will find out about the significance of corn and chocolate.

Food

The Maya people mainly ate **maize** (corn). **Maize** was very important to them as they believed that the first humans were made from **maize** dough by the gods.

The Maya made a bitter chocolatey drink from **cacao beans** that was enjoyed by the rich. It was used for medicines and in ceremonies. The **cacao beans** were highly valued and even used as a form of money.



Writing

The Maya writing system was used to write several different Maya languages. It was made up of many symbols called glyphs.

Logograms are glyphs representing whole words.

Syllabograms are glyphs representing units of sound (syllables).

The glyphs were carved on stone buildings and monuments and painted on pottery.

Maya **scribes** also wrote books called **codices**.



Key Vocabulary

civilisation

codices

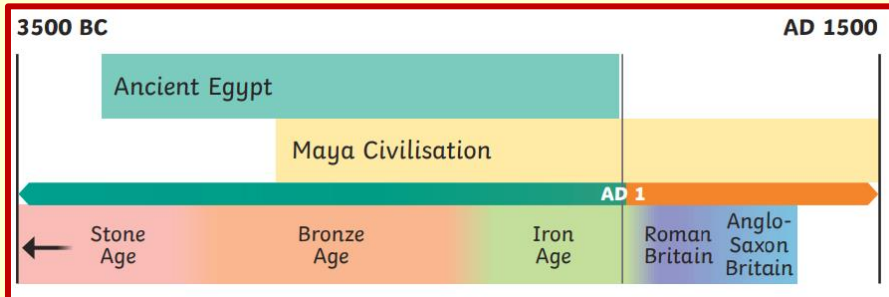
drought

maize

jaguar

cacao beans

scribes



Religion

The Maya believed in many gods and goddesses. They thought that the gods/goddesses had a good side and a bad side and that they could help or hurt them. The Maya people would dance, sing and make offerings to the gods/goddesses.

Maya priests were believed to be able to communicate directly with the gods/goddesses. As a result, they were very important in society.



The Afterlife

The Middleworld – The Maya people believed that the Earth, which they called the Middleworld, was large and flat and resting on the back of a creature, such as a turtle or crocodile.

The Upperworld – The Maya believed this was in the sky or heavens and was connected to the Middleworld by the branches of a tree.

The Underworld – A tree connecting its branches to the Upperworld was also believed to grow its roots down to the Underworld.

Key Dates

(c. stands for circa, which means approximately)

c. 2000 BC	The Maya civilisation 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 (16 th century)	The Spanish arrive in South America and set out to destroy the remaining elements of Maya civilisation 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 civilisation .
AD 2014	The cities of Lagunita and Tamchén are rediscovered.