



## Year 4 – Summer Term – The Maya

**In this topic, I will:**

- generate multiple questions to explore, choosing the ones I most want to investigate.
- understand the importance of translating the Mayan writing system for historians to learn about the Mayan civilisation.
- understand the importance of preserving historical documents and artefacts.
- know that knowledge about the past is constantly improving as historians make more discoveries.
- make suggestions about why the Mayan civilisation ended, based on my knowledge of the period.
- explain how the Mayan ruins were discovered.**
- know that the Mayans were organised into city states that were controlled by absolute monarchs.**
- explain the roles and status of different types of people in Mayan society.**
- describe Mayan religious beliefs, including the need for blood sacrifices.**
- describe the Mayan number and writing systems, and the Mayan calendar.**
- know when the Mayan civilisation was.
- organise key events from the Mayan civilisation on a timeline with their AD/BC dates.

Historical Enquiry  
 Historical Understanding  
 Chronological Understanding



Find out more

**National Curriculum Link:** Children will learn about The Maya: a non-European society that provides contrasts with British history.

- In this topic, I will:**
- explore where and when the remains of the Mayan civilisation were discovered.
  - find out about how the Mayans civilisation developed over time.
  - find out about the city states of the Maya and how society was organised
  - find out about Mayan religion and beliefs.
  - find out about everyday life for the Mayan people
  - explore Mayan writing and calendars.
  - find out about the decline of the Mayan civilisation.

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### KEY VOCABULARY

civilisation	An organised society with its own culture and way of life, existing in a particular area over a particular period of time.
drought	A long period with very little rain.
ritual	A ceremony, often religious, with set actions performed in a set order.
codices	Ancient handwritten texts. Maya codices could be unfolded like a concertina. One text is called a codex.
maize	Another word for sweetcorn or corn on the cob. It can be made into a dough and baked into tortillas.
cacao beans	Cacao trees sprout pods directly from their trunks. When they are ripe, the pods can be broken open to reveal the beans, which can then be dried, roasted and ground.
Aztec	The indigenous people who lived in Mexico before the Spanish conquests of the 16 <sup>th</sup> century
Conquistador	The name of the Spanish conquerors who conquered the Mayans.
Colony	The area in which the Mayans lived became a Spanish colony (under Spanish control).
Absolute Monarchy	A civilisation in which everybody is under the control of the King.
City State	Each Mayan city was its own state and under control of individual kings.

### Who were the Maya?

The Maya were an ancient civilisation of people who lived in an area that used to be known as Mesoamerica. People had lived in the area from around 5000 BC but it wasn't until around 300 BC that the first cities started to form. Before this people were hunter gatherers, or lived in small villages.

### Timeline of Key Events

2000BC – 1000BC	The Mayan civilisation emerges in Central America.
300BC	The first cities begin to develop and the Mayan population grows rapidly.
292BC	The first known Mayan writing is produced.
250AD	The Maya begin their most powerful era: astronomy, mathematics and architecture are all developing.
300AD	The Maya adopt the idea of a monarchy and are ruled by kings.
800-900AD	The major cities begin to decline and are eventually abandoned.
1500AD	Ships with Spanish explorers arrive. They bring with them diseases which killed many Mayans.
1591AD	Herman Cortes – A Spanish explorer – conquered the Mayans and began to remove Mayan culture.

### Key Questions:

- 1 What is the region where the Mayan civilisation existed?
- 2 In what century did the Spanish conquistadors discover the Mayan ruins?
- 3 The Mayan city states would often go to war with each other. What were their reasons? *Can you name four?*
- 4 After the kings, who were the most important people in Mayan society?
- 5 Which of these was an important food source, sacred to the Maya? *Rice, Maize, Seaweed or Rabbit*
- 6 How did the Maya honour their gods?
7. What is the Mayan symbol for '5'?
- 8 What did the Maya believe would happen at the end of each cycle of their 'Long Count' calendar?
- 9 Who was the Spanish explorer who conquered the Mayans?
- 10 What was the name of the indigenous people who lived in Mexico before the Spanish conquests of the 16<sup>th</sup> century?



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