

Key vocabulary

Maya The collective noun for the Maya people.

Civilisation An organised society with its own culture and way of life, existing in a particular area over a particular time.

Mesoamerica The region in which the Maya lived, spanning over Mexico and parts of Central America.

Hieroglyph A symbol that has a worded meaning, read like our graphemes.

Maize corn- a major food source for the Maya. With religious connections to the Gods.

Sacrifice An offering to please the Gods. A slaughtering of an animal or human as an offering to please the gods.

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.

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 be dried, roasted and ground.

The Maya Civilisation



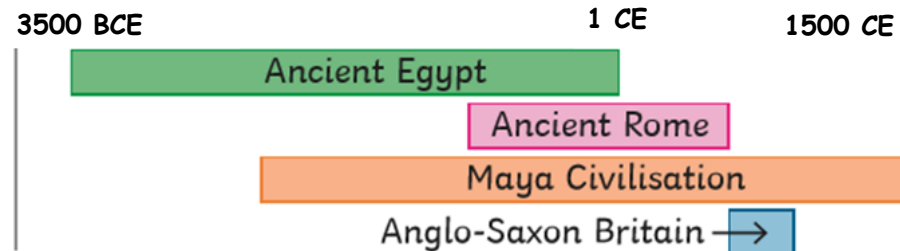
The Maya land included parts of what we now know as Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador in Central America.

Gods

The lives of the ancient Maya centred around their religion and gods of nature. Religion touched many aspects of their every day life. The Maya believed in and worshipped many different gods. They believed that the gods had a good side and a bad side and that each god could help or hurt them. The Maya would dance, sing and sometimes make offers of blood to the gods to demonstrate their respect and loyalty



Timeline



1100 BCE

700 BCE

100 BCE

400 CE

800 CE

First hunter, gatherers settle in the area

Maya writing developed

First pyramid built

Different city states take power

Decline of the Empire

How do we know?

American explorer and travel writer, **John Lloyd Stephens** and British artist, **Frederick Catherwood** are credited with re-igniting interest in the ancient Maya civilisation from 1839 onwards.

The ruins and lost cities of Mesoamerica had been explored and recorded earlier in history, but detailed documentation by Catherwood brought attention back to the Maya and their fascinating civilisation.

Numerous archaeological expeditions of the Maya region were launched following the work of Stephens and Catherwood.



El Castillo at Chichen Itza by Frederick Catherwood (1843)

Food



Maize was a very important crop to the Maya and made up about 80% of their diet. For thousands of years they worshiped the maize god and believed that their ancestors were created from maize dough by the gods.

The Maya made a bitter chocolatey drink from 'cacao beans'. This drink was enjoyed by the rich and used in medicines. The beans were highly valuable and even used as a form of money.



Chichén Itzá

Chichén Itzá is a well-preserved example of a Mayan city, located in Mexico now, which was part of the Maya, Mesoamerica. It is a popular tourist destination as it hosts a series of Maya sculptures and pyramids.



Amazing Inventors

The Maya developed a complex number and writing system.

Some glyphs used in Maya hieroglyphic writing are called logograms. Logograms represent a whole word.

CHAN 'sky'	WINIK 'person'	WITZ 'mountain'	K'IN 'sun'
B'ALAM 'jaguar'	K'AK' 'fire'	BAK 'bone'	WAY 'spirit'

ahaw (bird)	bih (fish)	bok (to take office)	k'ol (bird)	na (house)	kak (fire)
abot (to dance)	chan (bird)	hoy (to kiss, make proper)	k'ivil (bird)	nal (bird)	lum (stone)
chun (bird)	hun (bird)	k'in (bird)	nik (bird)	tz'um (bird)	wak (bird)
one, captive	chun (to be sooted)	hun (bird)	k'in (bird)	wak (bird)	wai (companion spirit)
bak (bird)	ha (water)	hu (bird)	k'uk' (quetzal)	sabak (bird)	mat (person)
balam (jaguar)	hai (to manifest)	k'ak' (fire)	kum (soat, center)	soz' (bat)	witz (mountain)