

Hola Mexico!- The Mayans Knowledge Organiser

Subject Specific Vocabulary

Agriculture	Farming— growing crops or rearing animals
Astronomy	The study of space, planets and stars
Calendar	A system used to divide up and organise events on time
Civilisation	A well organised and developed society
Culture	The lifestyle of a group of people or a society
Heritage	Traditions, language or buildings from the past that are important to a particular society
Indigenous	People, plants or animals that originated in a place
Settlement	A place where people establish a community
Temple	A building devoted to the worship of a god or gods
Tradition	An activity, custom or belief that people have continued to follow for a long time
Worship	To show love and devotion— usually to a god or group of gods



El Castillo temple

Did you know?

The Mayan idea of beauty included a flattened forehead, cross eyes, tattoos, teeth filing and large noses.



Sticky knowledge

1. The Maya lived in Mexico and other areas of Central America over 3000 years ago. The Mayans were experts in farming, pottery, writing and maths.
2. The Maya empire was organised into city states. Each city state was ruled by a different noble family. Mayan city states traded with each other- sometimes using cacao beans as money.
3. Each settlement had a wide open plaza area used as a central meeting point. Sometimes it would be used to play games such as pok-a-tok. They would also play a team game called Ulama. They would compete to get a large rubber ball through a stone ring using their knees, elbows or hips. The leader of the losing team was killed after the game.
4. The Maya used hieroglyphs to inscribe in stone slabs (called stelae) and in books (called codices).
5. The Maya observed the movement of the sun, moon and stars to create calendars. They were also great mathematicians creating an advanced number system.
6. The cacao beans were (and are) used to make chocolate. Hot chocolate was a sacred drink for the Maya.
7. The Maya were the first people to farm Maize (a cereal). They used it in many different ways: as a food, as a medicine and also as a fuel. They would even make baskets and mats with it.
8. Mayan temples were stepped to create a route to the heavens. In Chichen Itza (one of the largest Mayan cities) is the well known temple, El Castillo. During the spring and autumn equinox (when the time between sunrise and sunset is exactly 12 hours) the sun casts a shadow, that slithers down the steps of the temple like a snake.
9. Their religion was polytheistic (they believed in more than one god). Each god was associated with a different area of life.

Important dates

2500 BC – 910 AD	Start and end of the Ancient Mayan civilisation
250 AD	Start of classical period of Mayan civilisation
1605AD	Spanish invaders conquistadors) arrive in Mesoamerica
21st December 2012	The Mayans predicted the end of the world would happen on this date fortunately, they were wrong!



Cacao beans were sacred



Maize had many uses