

Maya Civilisation Knowledge Organiser

Summary

The Maya were a civilisation who lived in Mesoamerica (now Central America) between approximately 2000 BCE and 900CE. They are known for being the first Mesoamericans to develop writing. They also had a sophisticated culture in which they lived in city states. They built spectacular monuments and stepped pyramids - some (e.g. Chichen Itza) have become world tourist destinations in the modern day. They were also well-known for their advanced maths and calendars. Around 900CE, Maya cities became abandoned. No one knows for sure why this happened.

5 Key Facts

- 1) The Mayans predicted that the world would end in 2012.
- 2) Flat foreheads were fashionable so they would put baby's heads in a press to squash them.
- 3) It was considered beautiful to be cross-eyed so parents would hang balls in-between their children's eyes to make them look inwards.
- 4) Mayans sacrificed humans for religious and medical reasons. It was an honour to be sacrificed!
- 5) Noblewomen would file their teeth into sharp points.

Key Vocabulary

Calendar	A printed table showing all the days, weeks and months of the year.
Civilisation	Human society which is organised.
Dynasty	A series of rulers or leaders who are all from the same family, or a period when a country is ruled by them.
Empire	A group of countries ruled by a single person, government or country
Hieroglyphics	A system of writing using pictures not words.
Kingdom	A place ruled by a king, queen or important person.
Maize	Also known as corn, is a cereal grain
Temple	A building used for the worship of a god or gods in some religions.
Tomb	A large stone structure or underground room where someone, especially an important person, is buried.



1,100 BC
The first 'Mayan' settlements begin to appear in Mesoamerica along the pacific coast.



800BC
Instead of foraging, maize farming begins and trade between villages begins.



700BC
Mayan writing begins to develop through the form of hieroglyphs.



100BC - 450AD
Maya constructs its first pyramids and developing cities, prompting the rapid rise of Tikal in the tropical lowlands.



638AD
Pakal the Great (King of Palenque) dies. His death mask made of jade is created.



800AD - 1,502AD
Mayan civilization begins to decline and vanish. The Mayan ruins are found by a Spanish expedition lead by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba.

