

## Willerby Carr Lane Primary School - History

**Topic: The Maya**

**Year: 5**

**Strand: Early Civilizations**

### What should I already know?

- South America is a continent.
- The climate of South America is different to that of the UK.
- Human and physical geographical features of a region in South America.

### What will I know by the end of the unit?

Where was the Maya civilisation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Maya lived in present-day Mexico and Central America, in an area called Mesoamerica.</li> </ul>
When was the Maya civilisation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From around 4000 years ago (2000BC) until around 500 years ago (1500AD).</li> </ul>
What were the Maya famous for?	<p><b>Architecture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maya cities had similar layouts to each other</li> <li>• Their temples were in the form of pyramids</li> </ul> <p><b>Calendar system</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their sophisticated calendars helped them to track the time and important events like religious ceremonies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Early writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Maya hieroglyphic script was a writing system.</li> <li>• The Maya covered their cities and buildings with hieroglyphs carved into the stone.</li> <li>• Only rich nobles and priests, who had been trained as scribes, could write.</li> <li>• Long sheets of paper made from tree bark, was folded together like a fan to make a book, called a 'codex'.</li> <li>• The codices were sacred and kept in temples and important buildings.</li> <li>• Only four codices have survived because many were burned by Spanish explorers, who thought the books were evil.</li> </ul> <p><b>Number system</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Maya were advanced mathematicians.</li> </ul>
What were the religious beliefs of the Maya?	<p><b>The Maya Realm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Maya believed in heaven, earth and the underworld.</li> </ul> <p><b>Gods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Maya believed in many gods, each representing a different aspect of life.</li> </ul>

- Communities made regular offerings to the gods, including animal and human sacrifices.
- People thought the priests were in touch with the gods.
- The Maya gods were represented in human form, animal form or as a form of nature, eg: Sun God.

#### • **Creation Story**

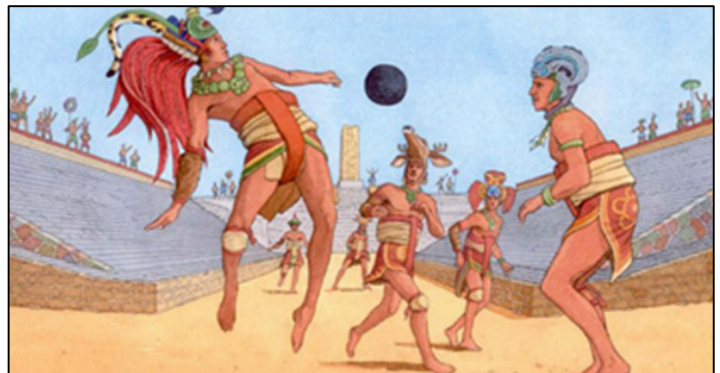
- The Maya had their own creation story and believed that the world started from nothing.

#### **Ball Games**

- The Maya loved ball games and had ball courts in every city.
- Ball courts were very large, each with a stone hoop mounted on a wall at one side.
- The Maya loved to play pok-a-tok, the aim of which was to throw a strong elastic ball through the hoop using just their hips, shoulders or arms.
- The winners won the belongings of the losing side.
- The losing side, often made up of prisoners, was killed as a sacrifice to the Maya gods.

What happened to end the Ancient Maya civilisation?

- People are unsure of why the Maya were largely wiped out. Suggestions range from disease, natural disasters to climate change.
- The Maya civilisation did not abruptly collapse but underwent a slow decline.



**Pok-a-tok – Maya ball game**

Vocabulary	
archaeologist	someone who studies the past by exploring old remains
architecture	the art of planning, designing and constructing buildings
Chichen Itza	a village in Yucatán state in Mexico: site of important Mayan ruins. A UNESCO World Heritage Site
civilisation	a human society with its own social organisation and culture.
climate	the general weather conditions that are typical of an area.
codex / codices	Maya books written in hieroglyphics on paper made from tree bark, folded into a fan shape.
continent	a very large area of land that consists of many countries. South America is a continent.
culture	activities such as the arts and philosophy, which are considered to be important for the development of civilisation
deities	a god or goddess
demise	something or someone is their end or death
drought	a long period of time during which no rain falls.
economy	the wealth that a society or country gets from business and industry
hierarchy	a system of organising people into different ranks or levels of importance, for example in society

hieroglyphics	a writing system in which each symbol (or glyph) was able to represent particular words, ideas or sounds. Sentences, and even whole stories, could be formed by placing several glyphs together.
human features	features of land that have been impacted by human activity
indigenous	people or things that belong to the country in which they are found
Maya	Maya (noun and adjective) describes the people and their culture
Mayan	The language of the Maya
merchant	a person who buys or sells goods in large quantities
Mesoamerica	Central America - the countries consist of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Belize; and the western sections of Honduras and Nicaragua, and northern Costa Rica
physical features	natural features of land
plaza	an open square in a city.
polytheists	the worship of, or belief in, more than one god
society	people in general, thought of as a large organised group
trade	the activity of buying, selling, or exchanging goods or services



Maya pyramid at Palenque



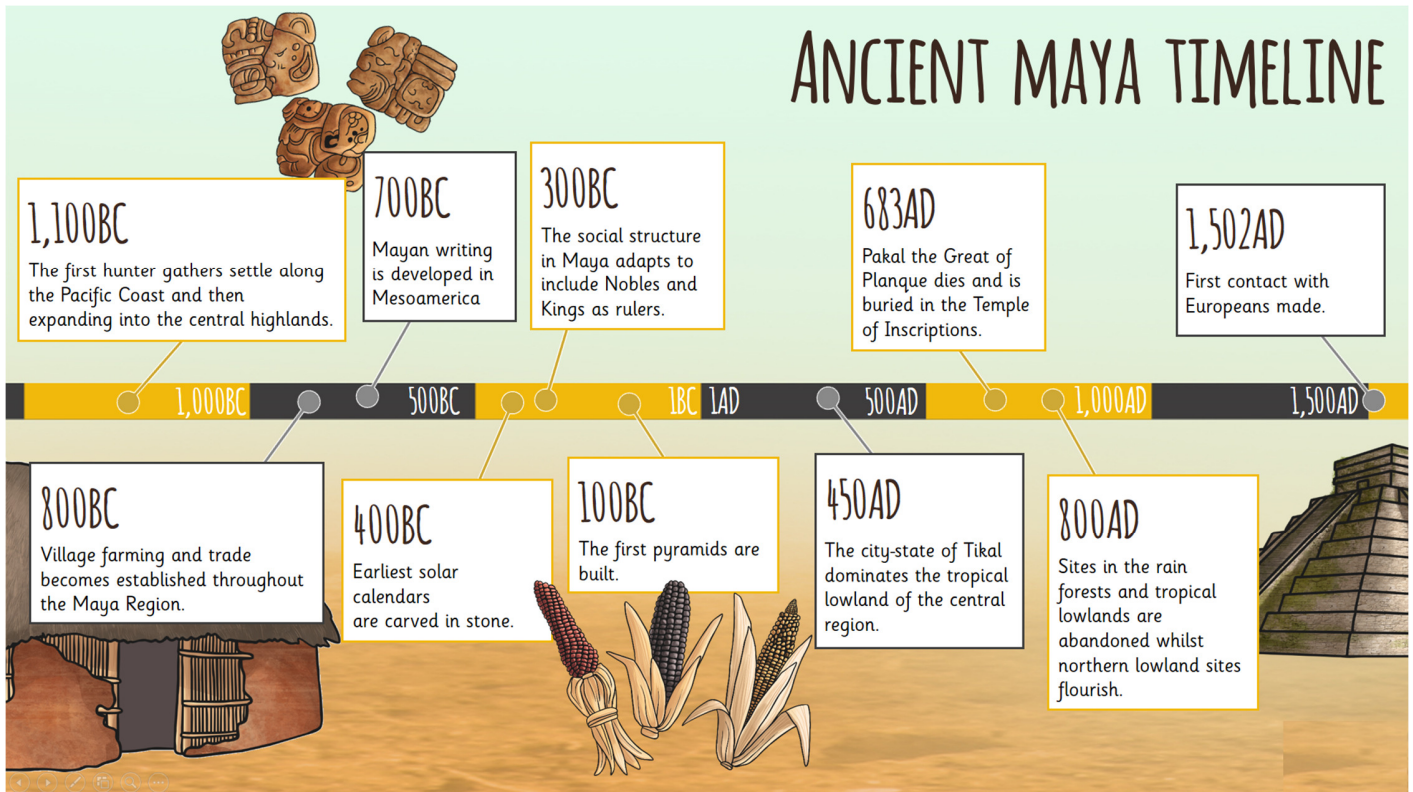
Mayan Hieroglyphics



Mesoamerica

where the ancient Maya were found

# ANCIENT MAYA TIMELINE



Important figures	Image
<p><b>John Lloyd Stephens</b> American explorer and travel writer</p> <p><b>Frederick Catherwood</b> British artist.</p>	<p>Stephens and Catherwood helped re-ignite interest in the ancient Maya civilisation after they published a book together that contains many detailed drawings and maps in 1839.</p>

Historical Skills and Enquiry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine a variety of sources and use these to make inferences about the past - in particular about Maya economy, culture, religious beliefs and society.</li> <li>Describe how the Maya civilisation has had an impact on modern society.</li> <li>Examine the timeline of the Maya civilisation and consider where there was rapid change and where there was very little change. Explain why this may be the case.</li> <li>Compare what was happening in the Maya civilisation with what was happening in Britain at the same time.</li> <li>Place the chronology of key events of the Maya civilisation on a timeline with a chronology of the history of Britain. Where are the overlaps?</li> <li>Compare the Maya with the Greek and Egyptian civilisations using a Venn diagram.</li> <li>Describe the ideas, beliefs and attitudes of all groups of people in the Maya civilisation.</li> <li>Use appropriate vocabulary to communicate about the Maya</li> </ul>