

## GREAT CIVILISATIONS TOPIC: The Maya



### OVERVIEW:

Discover the mysterious Maya of Mesoamerica. Investigate the timeline as you discover when and where the Maya built this magnificent civilisation. Explore different kinds of historical sources and evaluate their usefulness. Marvel at how the Maya lived, study buildings, trade and the importance of food and farming. Learn about Maya beliefs, Gods, temples and one of the most dangerous and deadly ball games of all time . Discover the Maya legacy.

### Books:

The Curse of the Maya – Johnny Pearce & Andy Loneragan

Maya Legends: Rainplayer, The Hero Twins

### Knowledge:

MAYAN CIVILIZATION

Central America

Timeline								
1100 B.C.	800 B.C.	400 B.C.	300 B.C.	100 B.C.	600	800	900	1502
The first hunter-gatherers settle on the pacific coast	Village farming and trade become established	First solar calendars invented	Cities become centres for trade and Kings begin to rule	First pyramids are built	Cities start expanding quickly	Building of stepped pyramid of Chichen-Itza	Decline of Mayan cities	First contact with Europeans is made

#### Key Vocabulary

astronomy	The Mayans were able to predict solar eclipses and used observatories and shadow-casting devices.
calendar	These were circular and charted the movements of the sun, moon, stars and planets, with 365 days in a year. They used about 800 symbols to create writing, often on folded pages forming a book (codex).
hieroglyphs	The King/Queen was thought to be given the right to rule by the gods. Each city had a palace for them.
Kings/Queens	The King/Queen was thought to be given the right to rule by the gods. Each city had a palace for them.
maize	The staple food of the Mayans which was so important that they even had a maize god.
numbers	Using a base 20 system (we use base 10), they used dots and bars to create numbers and had a symbol for zero.
pok-a-tok	A game where large rubber balls were aimed at stone hoops. Losers were sometimes sacrificed to the gods!
pyramids	Built with a temple at the top to give sacrifices to the gods, others were built for the gods themselves.
sacrifice	Humans and animals were used as a blood offering to gods, mostly war prisoners by decapitation or heart removal.
stelae	Stone monuments glorifying Kings and record his deeds, although early examples were of mythical scenes.

#### GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

**Mayan Dress**  
Commoners and slaves wore plain loincloths, but the elite added feathers, animal skins or gems. Noblemen covered their lower half with a colourful garment and wore large, elaborate headdresses. Women wore skirts and tunics. Footwear was simple, usually being barefoot or sandals.

**Trade**  
Merchants drove their human caravans along roads, down rivers and around coasts to trade with fellow Mayans and other Mesoamericans. The geography was so varied that they relied on trade to get the things they needed off each other, from maize, fish and salt to stingray spines (used for bloodletting) and valuable stones such as jade and obsidian.

**What happened to the Mayans?**  
Around 900, many cities in the southern lowlands were abandoned but states in the uplands of the Yucatan peninsula continued to flourish until the arrival of the Spanish in 1502. One belief is that the Toltecs and the Aztecs took over with their own empires but later, when the Spanish arrived, they brought disease and forced them to give up their gods and become Christians.

#### FAMOUS FIGURES

**Mayan Gods**  
Some were in human form, others in animal but the most supreme god was Itzamna, the creator god, lord of day and night and ruler of the heavens. Many looked after the weather or crops such as Chac, the rain god and Kinich-Ahau the sun god. Priests would perform ceremonies (including sacrifices) to please them and Kings were thought to turn into gods after they died. They believed the world was divided into three parts (Heaven, Earth and the Underworld), linked together by a giant world tree.

**Palenque Rulers**  
Archaeologists can name 17 rulers of the city-state of Palenque from 431-800. The most famous was Pakal I, also known as Pakal the Great, who ruled from 615-683. He began his rule at the age of just 12 and constructed some of Palenque's finest buildings and founded a great dynasty. His funeral mask was carved from stunning Jade.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The Mayans tied boards to their babies' heads to produce a flat forehead. They also tried to make their babies cross-eyed! Big noses were also considered beautiful.

### Assessment:

**MAYAN CIVILIZATION**

**Mini-Quiz #1**

1) When were the first solar calendars invented?  
a) 200 B.C. ☐  
b) 300 B.C. ☐  
c) 400 B.C. ☐

2) What was the name of the supreme god?  
a) Kinich-Ahau ☐  
b) Chac ☐  
c) Itzamna ☐

3) What was a stela?  
a) a ball game ☐  
b) a stone monument ☐  
c) a circular calendar ☐

4) What were Mayans able to predict?  
a) eclipses ☐  
b) pok-a-tok scores ☐  
c) Spanish invasions ☐

5) What was Pakal the Great's mask carved from?  
a) wood ☐  
b) bronze ☐  
c) jade ☐

6) What was did they believe the world was not divided into?  
a) Heaven ☐  
b) Earth ☐  
c) Underground ☐

7) What was the staple food for the Mayans?  
a) maize ☐  
b) peppers ☐  
c) bread ☐

8) How many rulers of Palenque were there from 431-800?  
a) 17 ☐  
b) 18 ☐  
c) 19 ☐

**MAYAN CIVILIZATION**

**Mini-Quiz #2**

1) When did the building of Chichen-Itza begin?  
a) 800 ☐  
b) 900 ☐  
c) 1000 ☐

2) How old was Pakal the Great when he began his rule?  
a) 11 ☐  
b) 12 ☐  
c) 13 ☐

3) Which peninsula continued to flourish after 900?  
a) Yucatan ☐  
b) Chichen-Itza ☐  
c) Umal ☐

4) What year was there first contact with Europeans?  
a) 1582 ☐  
b) 1502 ☐  
c) 1592 ☐

5) What did they use for bloodletting?  
a) a wooden knife ☐  
b) an iron nail ☐  
c) a stingray spine ☐

6) What was a not a valuable stone for Mayans?  
a) obsidian ☐  
b) jade ☐  
c) rose quartz ☐

7) Who would wear large, elaborate headdresses?  
a) noblemen ☐  
b) commoners ☐  
c) elite ☐

8) Who would mainly be sacrificed to the gods?  
a) commoners ☐  
b) prisoners of war ☐  
c) priests ☐

9) What was Kinich-Ahau the king of?  
a) rain ☐  
b) the heavens ☐  
c) the sun ☐

10) What were balls made of in pok-a-tok?  
a) wood ☐  
b) rubber ☐  
c) leather ☐

Total Score

\_\_\_\_ out of 10

www.mrracdpresent.com

Total Score

\_\_\_\_ out of 10

www.mrracdpresent.com

## Knowledge:

### *Meeting the Maya and Timeline*

- I can discover facts about the Maya civilisation and explain who the Maya people were and when and where in the world they lived.
- I can identify and use a range of evidence sources to help me understand more about the Maya civilisation.

### *The City States*

- I can explain how the Maya Civilisation was organised and ruled.
- I can make comparisons to other civilisations and the current day.

### *Life in The Maya*

- *Understand trading in the Ancient Maya world. Work with maps and discover the goods that were traded by the Ancient Maya.*
- I can describe a range of foods that were eaten by the ancient Maya people and explain why certain foods were particularly significant.

### *Maya Religion and Gods*

- I can explain the religious beliefs of the Maya people, understand how they worshipped, name some of the main gods and know what they represented to the people.

### *Maya Culture*

- I can understand how the Maya number system works.
- I can explain what the Mayan writing system consists of, how words are constructed and what codices are.
- I can explain the importance of astronomy to the Maya.
- Maya Art

### *What happened to the Maya?*

- I can explain possible reasons for the decline of the Maya.

