

Knowledge Organiser

Year: 6

Subject: History

Unit: Who were the Mayan?

Overview:

During this sequence of learning, pupils will look at the reasons we study the Mayan Empire in school and how the Maya were able to grow so strong. They will also look at what life was like at the height of the Mayan Civilisation and why the Mayan Empire ended so quickly.

What should I already know?

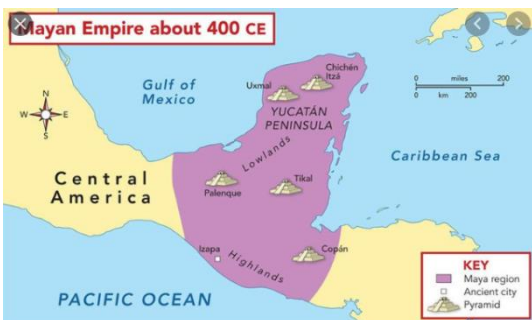
- Ancient civilisations existed in the past such as the Ancient Egyptians, Shang Dynasty, The Indus Valley and Ancient Greece.
- We depend on evidence found as artefacts and buildings for our knowledge about these civilisations.
- Different ancient civilisations throughout the world co-existed at certain points in time.
- Each civilisation has its own set of cultural characteristics, including beliefs: some of these beliefs seem to be similar.

Historical Skills:

- Select relevant sections of information to address historically valid questions and construct detailed, informed responses.
- Describe the key features of the past, including attitudes, beliefs and the everyday lives of men, women and children.

What will I know by the end of the unit?

- The Mayan Civilisation extended from what is now South East Mexico through Central America.



- The Mayan Civilisation lived there 4,000 years ago (from about 2000BC) and lasted approximately 3000 years.
- The Maya were able to build massive stone-stepped pyramids and cities without metal tools or

cartwheels. They were architects, scientists, astronomers, mathematicians as well as writers - they developed their own hieroglyphic writing.

- There is a wide of evidence to inform us such as writing on sculpture and buildings. These inscriptions deal mostly with calendrical and astronomical information as well as historical events. The glyphs (symbolic marks) were only deciphered in the 1960s.
- The Mayan civilisation flourished, despite its location, which was mainly rainforest and mountains. People were heavily dependent on one particular crop, maize, and needed more land to farm. They

Vocabulary:

Empire	A group of nations or people under one ruler or government.
Sacrifice	A religious activity that involved the killing of animals or people to make the gods happy.
Rituals	The tasks performed by the Maya to satisfy the gods.
Class society	A class position based on economic/political or cultural characteristics.
Astronomer	A scientist who studies stars, planets and other natural objects.
Culture	The ideas, customs and social behaviour of particular people or a society.
Dynasty	A succession of people from the same family who play an important role.
Calendar	A printed table showing all the days, weeks and months in a year.



developed a farming technique called 'slash and burn' whereby trees were felled in the hot summer, allowed to dry and then burned.

- Similar to life in Ancient Egypt, Mayan society was hierarchical (shown on the right). The King was the most important; this was followed by top generals, scribes and priests; merchants and warriors; farmers and labourers; and finally slaves at the bottom. The position within the hierarchy affected their lifestyle.
- There is more evidence of how the more powerful people lived than common people so it is important to understand that many artists' reconstructions are based on a mixture of physical evidence and imagination.
- The Maya practised human sacrifice as a way to appease their gods. There are conflicting views concerning this practice as to whether they were simply following their beliefs or they were a bloodthirsty civilisation.
- There are a number of different reasons that have been suggested for the decline in the Mayan civilisation. These include: extended drought and overpopulation, although nobody is sure for certain.
- During the end of the Mayan Civilisation, the Anglo-Saxons were settling in Britain. There are many comparisons to make including similarities such as: they both had religious buildings, played games and had similar ways of writing.

Hierarchy of Mayan society

