

Year	History	Ancient Maya	Knowledge Organiser
-------------	----------------	---------------------	--------------------------------

Historical summary

Maya , Group of Mesoamerican Indians who between AD 250 and 900 developed one of the Western Hemisphere's greatest civilizations. By AD 200 they had developed cities containing palaces, temples, plazas, and ball courts. They used stone tools to quarry the immense quantities of stone needed for those structures; their sculpture and relief carving were also highly developed. Mayan hieroglyphic writing survives in books and inscriptions. Mayan mathematics featured positional notation and the use of the zero; Mayan astronomy used an accurately determined solar year and precise tables of the positions of Venus and the Moon. After 900 the civilization declined rapidly for unknown reasons. Descendants of the Maya are now subsistence farmers in southern Mexico and Guatemala.

Key facts

By 900 AD the Maya were a very advanced society. They had started to farm and even do maths. The Maya lived in a place called Mesoamerica which was made up of Mexico and parts of Central America. They lived in places such as Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Yucatan Peninsula and El Salvador. The Maya had lots of cities that they lived in. In total there were 60 of them. The Maya were very clever and invented lots of things, this included their own calendars, farming methods, writing systems, sports and religion. Only one ruler per city was allowed. They believed that their rulers were given the power by God. One of their main talents was building. They built so many things such as palaces, pyramids, ceremonial structures and temple observatories. The Mayans had a writing system where they used hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics are signs that make up sounds and words. There were up to 800 glyphs in their writing system.

Important questions

Who are the Maya and where do they live?
 What do the ruins of Chichen Itza tell us about the lives of the ancient Maya?
 Why do historians know so much about ancient Maya society?
 Why did the ancient Maya leave their jungle cities?
 Why did the ancient Maya change the way they lived?
 Do all civilisations have to change over time?

Vocabulary	
Central America	Southern most region of North America.
Region	An area, part of a country or the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries
Landscape	All the visible features of an area of land
Climate	The weather conditions prevailing in an area in general or over a long period.
Natural vegetation	A plant community, which has grown naturally without human aid
Tropical	A climate where all twelve months have a temperature of warmer than 18° centigrade , with only two seasons, a wet and dry season.
Plantation	An area on which crops are grown.
Hieroglyphics	Writing consisting of symbols and images.
Cultivated	Preparation of land for crops.
Memorial	A statue or structure established to remind people of a person or event.
Chichen Itza	Large pre-Columbian city built by the Maya people
Restored	Return something to a former condition.
Construction	The action of building something such as a large structure.

What I should know by the end of this unit.

Identify, locate and describe the region of the world in which Maya people live and explain using a range of sources of evidence what the landscape, climate and natural vegetation of this area is like.
 Identify, describe and provide reasons to explain the occupations of modern Maya people.
 Understand through explanation the purpose of the ancient Maya city of Chichen Itza.
 Infer using reasoning and informed judgment the purpose of a range of ancient Maya artefacts – including stone carvings, hieroglyphs, clay and stone pottery and figurines and ornaments – justifying their conclusions.