



KEY FACTS

- The Mayans were an ancient civilization that inhabited Middle America. It has a very intriguing and also complex history. For an ancient civilization, they had a very advanced culture and had developed their own written language, architecture, mathematics and astronomical system. The reason for the collapse of this great ancient civilization is still a mystery.
- The Mayans originated at around 2600 BC. By 250 AD they were at the zenith of power, but by 900 AD the Mayan civilization began to decline.
- Ancient Mayan houses had walls made of poles plastered with earth and the floors were covered with leaves that were changed frequently.
- The Mayans worshipped many gods. Mayan gods could change themselves into human animal shapes. The priests performed ceremonies to keep the gods happy.
- The Maya were advanced mathematicians. Their numerical system, possibly one of the world most advanced at the time, allowed the Maya to do the elaborate calculations needed to make precise astronomical predictions.
- Chichén Itzá is a large Mayan city famous for a large, pyramid temple built by the Maya civilization. It is considered to be one of the Seven Wonders of the New World. It thrived from about 600 AD., until 1221, when the power in the region shifted to Mayapan.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM AIMS

- Addressing and posing questions about similarity and difference of this civilisation and its impact on our lives today.
- To develop the appropriate use of historical terms.

TOPIC VOCABULARY

Chichen Itza – The most powerful city-state during the start of the Post-classic period.

City-state – An independent government where a large city rules the surrounding area.

Itzamna – The main god of the Maya

Pyramid – The Mayans built step pyramids with flat tops. At the top they built a temple to their gods.

Cacao – Chocolate producing plant.

Classic Period – 250-900 AD. The Golden Age of the Mayan Civilization.

Decipher – To translate the signs of a language or writing system.

Epigrapher – A person who studies systems of writing.

Hieroglyphs – The symbols that make up the Mayan system of writing.

Jade – green or white gemstone

Maize – A main source of food for the Mayans

ONLINE RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/topics/zq6svcw>

<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/history/mayans/>

<https://www.booksfortopics.com/mayans>

OTHER USEFUL VOCABULARY

Codex (a Mayan book on one sheet of paper), Hero Twins (a Mayan myth), Pre Classic Period, Post Classic Period