

The Maya was a civilisation who lived in Mesoamerica (now Central America) between approximately 2000BC and 900AD. The Maya are known for their skilled agriculture, pottery, hieroglyphic writing, calendar making and mathematics. They left behind an impressive amount of architecture and symbolic artwork. They were also deeply religious and worshiped various Gods.

THE MAYA

THE NUMBER SYSTEM

The Maya had a good understanding of numbers and they developed a complex number and counting system which was advanced for their time. They were one of only two cultures in the world to develop the concept of zero. The Maya people used symbols to represent their numbers.

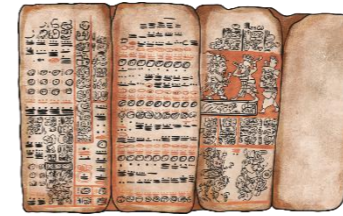
THE ANCIENT MAYA PLACE IN TIME

- The Maya civilisation came into being around 2000 BC
- By around AD 900, cities in the rainforest were abandoned and people moved up north to the highlands of Guatemala and the Yucatan.
- It was due to the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century that their ancient cities fell to ruin.



MAYA WRITING

Developed in 700BC, the Maya people wrote books made of the bark from fig trees. One book is called a codex and the plural is codices. The codices were written by professional scribes and contained information about astronomy, gods, war and history.



Maya hieroglyphic writing can be made up of syllabograms (representing sounds) or logograms (representing whole words).



About 150 syllabograms were used in the Maya script and syllables were often represented by more than one glyph.

1	•	11	• ••	20	• ••••	30	• •••••
2	••	12	•• •••	21	• •••••	31	• ••••••
3	•••	13	••• ••••	22	•• •••••	32	•• ••••••
4	••••	14	•••• •••••	23	••• •••••	33	••• ••••••
5	—	15	— •••••	24	•••• •••••	34	•••• ••••••
6	•	16	• •••••	25	— •••••	35	• ••••••
7	••	17	•• •••••	26	• •••••	36	•• ••••••
8	•••	18	••• •••••	27	•• •••••	37	••• ••••••
9	••••	19	•••• •••••	28	•••• •••••	38	•••• ••••••
10	—			29	••••• •••••	39	••••• ••••••

The Maya people used a base 20 number system, so after number 19 multiples of 20 were written above the bottom number. This is called a vigesimal positional number system.

CHOCOLATE



The Maya used chocolate in religious ceremonies and they also mixed them with herbs to make medicines.

The Maya word for chocolate is 'Kakaw'

Cacao trees sprout cacao pods directly from their trunks. The pods are the opened to reveal the cacao beans inside. They were used to make a chocolatey drink which was enjoyed by the rich – however it had more of a bitter taste

Later on in Maya history, cacao beans were used as a form of currency

MAYAN GODS

Religion was an integral part of the ancient Maya culture, intertwined with all other aspects of society.

The Maya believed in and worshipped a number of different gods. They believed that the gods had a good side and a bad side and that they could help or hurt them. The Maya would dance, sing and sometimes make offerings of blood to the gods to demonstrate their respect and loyalty.

'Mesoamerica refers to an area where a number of societies had been formed before the Spanish arrived in the 16th century. It covers Mexico and the northern parts of Central America. 'Mesoamerica' can also refer to the culture of the people who lived there. The Maya lived in the south east of this area.

Key Vocabulary			
Hieroglyphics	Symbols and pictures used for writing	Maya	An ancient Mesoamerican civilisation
Mayan	The language that the Maya people spoke	Civilisation	A group of people settled as a community
Mesoamerica	An historical region including part of modern Mexico and Central America that was inhabited by the Maya	Pyramid	A large monument with four sides that tapers at the top. The Maya built step pyramids with flat tops. At the top, they built a temple to their Gods.
Codex or Codices	Ancient manuscripts (books) that tells us about the lives of the Maya.	Glyph	A symbol used in writing
Itzamna	The main God of the Maya – Itzamna was the God of fire who created the Earth	Cacao	Seeds that the Maya used to make chocolate

ITZAMNA



One of the creator Gods
Inventor of Writing

KIMI



Death God

MAIZE GOD



Humans were created from maize dough

CHAC



Brought rain for crops
Created storms, thunder and lightning

IX CHEL



Wife of Itzamna
Goddess of childbirth, healing and weaving

HISTORY TIMELINE

