

What was life like for people of the Maya?



The Maya were an ancient civilisation of people who lived in an area that used to be known as **Mesoamerica**. Maya culture was well established by 1000 BC and lasted until 1697.

Key questions

- Who were the Maya and when did they live?
- What religion did the Maya follow?
- What was life like for a Maya citizen?
- How did the Maya write?
- What evidence is there of Maya civilisation?
- What food was important to the Maya?

Key concept: Social class



Prior learning

In year 3, you learnt about the Ancient Egyptians, and in year 4 you learnt about Ancient Greece. After this unit of work, you will be able to compare and contrast what you have learnt previously about other ancient civilisations with the practices of the Maya. You will also have a further depth of understanding of World history.

Key vocabulary

- Ancient - belonging to the very distant past; no longer in existence
- Civilisation - the society, culture and way of life of a particular area
- Mesoamerica - historical region in southern North America and Central America
- Culture - the ideas, customs and behaviour of people and society
- Classic period - the golden age of the Maya Empire beginning in A.D 250 when the civilisation grew to 40 cities
- Sacrifice - an act of slaughtering an animal or person as an offering to a deity
- Codices - an ancient manuscript text in book form
- Ritual - an act or behaviour which has the intention of communicating with a deity
- Syllabogram - signs for each syllable in the language
- Logogram - sign or character represented by a word or phrase

Key concept The Maya wrote using hieroglyphs, using logograms representing words and ideas.



Key concept The Maya worshipped gods and was a very important part of their daily lives. They have many special ceremonies to honour the gods and ask for blessings.

Key concept American explorer, John Lloyd Stephens, and British artist, Frederik Catherwood are credited with re-igniting interest in the ancient Maya civilisation in 1839. They explored the ruins of Copan and published a book with their observations and findings.

