

Welton Primary School—History Knowledge Organiser



Year: 5

The Mayans
















Timeline								
1100 B.C.	800 B.C.	400 B.C.	300 B.C.	100 B.C.	600	800	900	1502
First hunter-gatherers settle on the pacific coast	Village farming and trade become established	First solar calendars invented	Cities become centres for trade and Kings begin to rule	First pyramids are built	Cities start expanding quickly	Building of stepped pyramid of Chichen-Itza	Decline of Mayan cities	First contact with Europeans is made

Vocabulary	
Stone Age	A prehistoric period when weapons were made of stone
Chichen Itza	A large pre-Columbian city built by the Maya people
deities	God or goddess or divine being
demise	Die or the end of something
hierarchy	A way of ranking and organizing things or people
indigenous	The first people who lived in any region
Mayan	Peoples that made their home in an area known as Mesoamerica
Mesoamerica	Modern day Mexico and Central America
plaza	A public square in a city or town
city-state	An independent sovereign city
hieroglyphics	A forma writing system using symbols
glyphs	A character or a symbol
priests	A religious leader that controlled learning and ritual



The Maya were a Stone Age society in Central America. They formed a society of city states, largely based in tropical rainforests. Many historians think the Maya were the most advanced society in Mesoamerica during this period, even though they did not use wheels, had no metal and no major roads. They succeeded in building a huge trading empire and some of their cities grew to contain around 50,000 people. They used the rainforest effectively, mainly growing maize and grinding it into flour to make tortilla-type bread. They gave the world chocolate, which they drank flavoured with chillies. They also used cocoa beans as a form of currency. Historians disagree about why the end of the Mayan era happened. There are still around 5 million Maya living in the region today and they provide us with many insights into their ancestors.

Mayan writing system	Mayan Calendar	Mayan Creation Story
The Maya used an advanced form of writing called hieroglyphics. Their writing looks similar to the ancient Egyptians, but is actually quite different. In Mayan hieroglyphics, they used symbols to represent words, sounds, or objects. By putting several glyphs together the Maya wrote sentences and told stories. Only the wealthy Maya became priests and learned to read and write. They wrote on long sheets of paper made from bark or leather. These sheets were folded up like an accordion to make books. A Maya book is called a codex.	The Maya had two kinds of calendars, a religious calendar called the Tzolk'in and a solar calendar called the Haab'. Every 52 years the two calendars would start on the same day. They would celebrate the New Fire Festival on this day (El Fuego Nuevo). All the fires throughout their households would be put out and they would throw away all their clay utensils. It was a time of renewal and new beginnings. The solar calendar, or Haab', had 18 months of 20 days each. There were five extra "unlucky" days in the 19th month to get to total of 365 days in a year. They numbered the days from 0 to 19. The religious calendar, or Tzolk'in, was a 260-day calendar. This calendar has two cycles, a 20 day cycle and a 13 day cycle. Each day has a name and a number.	The Popol Vuh tells the creation myth of the Mayan people who lived in the present day Yucatan Peninsula. The myth was originally written in hieroglyphics, but was translated into the alphabet in the 16th century. The Popol Vuh states that the world consisted of the sky and the sea. The gods resided in either the sky or the sea and realized the great potential for the emptiness. One god from each region, Plumed Serpent from the sky and Hurricane from the sea, came together to create the world. The two "great thinkers" filled the emptiness through talking. Whatever they said was created.

Mayan Maths																																									
<p>The Maya used a number system with the base number of 20 (we use a base-10 number system). They wrote numbers using a system of bars and dots. A bar represented the number 5. Every 5 numbers they added another bar. The number zero was written with a symbol that looked like a shell.</p>	<table><tr><td>0</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>•</td><td>••</td><td>•••</td><td>••••</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>•</td><td>••</td><td>•••</td><td>••••</td></tr><tr><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>•</td><td>••</td><td>•••</td><td>••••</td></tr><tr><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>•</td><td>••</td><td>•••</td></tr></table>	0	1	2	3	4		•	••	•••	••••	5	6	7	8	9		•	••	•••	••••	10	11	12	13	14		•	••	•••	••••	15	16	17	18	19			•	••	•••
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Mayan Ball Games
The Mesoamerican ball game was played, by all the cultures in the region, beginning with the Olmecs who may have invented it. The ball game goes back 3,500 years, making it the first organized game in the history of sports. Mayans loved the game and everyone played at various times, but it also held deep religious, ritual meaning as well.