



Maya Civilization Knowledge Organiser



Summary

The Maya were a civilisation who lived in Mesoamerica (now Central America) between approximately 2000 BCE and 900CE.

They are known for being the first Mesoamericans to develop writing. They also had a sophisticated culture in which they lived in city states.

They built spectacular monuments and stepped pyramids – some (e.g. Chichen Itza) have become world tourist destinations in the modern day.

They were also well-known for their advanced maths and calendars. Around 900CE, Maya cities became abandoned. No one knows for sure why this happened.

Top 5 Maya Facts

1. The Mayans predicted that the world would end in 2012.
2. Flat foreheads were fashionable so they would put baby's heads in a press to squash them.
3. It was considered beautiful to be cross-eyed so parents would hang balls in-between their children's eyes to make them look inwards.
4. Mayans sacrificed humans for religious and medical reasons. It was an honour to be sacrificed!
5. Noblewomen would file their teeth into sharp points.

Vocabulary List

Artefact	An object that is made by a person, such as a tool or a decoration, especially one that is of historical interest.
Calendar	A printed table showing all the days, weeks and months of the year.
Civilisation	Human society which is organised.
Dynasty	A series of rulers or leaders who are all from the same family, or a period when a country is ruled by them.
Empire	A group of countries ruled by a single person, government or country.
Hieroglyphics	A system of writing using pictures not words.
Kingdom	A place ruled by a king, queen or important person.
Maize	Also known as corn, is a cereal grain.
Prediction	A statement about what you think will happen in the future.
Temple	A building used for the worship of a god or gods in some religions.
Tomb	A large stone structure or underground room where someone, especially an important person, is buried.
Worship	To have or show a strong feeling or respect and admiration for a God or Goddess.



Timeline

1100 BC Hunter gatherers settle along the Pacific coast.	1100 BC Settlements begin to appear.	700 BC Maya writing is developed	100 BC The first Maya Pyramids are built.	900 -1200 AD El Castillo is built.	250 AD Beginning of the Classic Period.	1000 AD Chichen Itza is the most powerful city.	1502 AD First contact with Europe.
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