

When and where in the world?



The Maya were one of the longest-lasting ancient civilisations. They began somewhere before 1000 BCE and continued until 1697 CE. That's a longer period of time than both the Ancient Egyptians and the Ancient Romans. The Maya people made their home in an area known as



Mesoamerica. Mesoamerica covers modern-day Mexico and Central America.

Maya Writing

The Maya writing system was made up of over 800 symbols called glyphs. Some glyphs were **logograms**, representing a whole word, and some were **syllabograms**, representing units of sound. They were carved onto stone buildings and monuments and painted onto pottery. Maya scribes also wrote books, called codices. Only priests and noblemen would know the whole written language.



Year 4

Knowledge Organiser

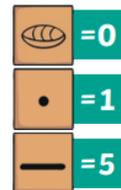
Mysterious Mayans

Key Events

2000BC	The Maya civilisation comes into being in Central America
300BC	Cities, such as El Mirador, become large and powerful.
AD 900	Cities in the rainforest are abandoned due to an extensive drought. People move north to the highlands of Guatemala and the Yucatán.
AD 1000	Cities like Chichén Itzá (which has two temple pyramids) are still thriving.
AD 1500s	The Spanish arrive in South America and set out to destroy the remaining elements of Maya civilisation as part of their conquest.
AD 1839	American explorer and writer, John Lloyd Stephens, and British artist, Frederick Catherwood explore Copán, reigniting interest in the Maya civilisation. They go on to document other Maya cities, including Chichén Itzá.
AD 2014	The cities of Lagunita and Tamchén are rediscovered.

Maya Numbers

The Maya developed a complex number and counting system that 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 just three symbols in their number system. These are thought to represent items that the Maya people might have first used to count with, such as pebbles, sticks and shells.



Key Vocabulary

civilisation	An organised society with its own culture and way of life, existing in a particular area over a particular period of time.
drought	A long period with very little rain.
ritual	A ceremony, often religious, with set actions performed in a set order.
scribes	People paid to write things down, either as an official record or for someone else unable to write.
codices	Ancient handwritten texts. Maya codices could be unfolded like a concertina. One text is called a codex.
maize	Another word for sweetcorn or corn on the cob. It can be made into a dough and baked into tortillas.
cacao beans	Cacao trees sprout pods directly from their trunks. When they are ripe, the pods can be broken open to reveal the beans, which can then be dried, roasted and ground.

Did you know?

- All Maya people shared a common culture and religion.
- Each Maya city governed itself and had its own noble ruler. The cities never came together to form a single empire. Mayan Kings were constantly at war with each other; fighting for tribute or gifts and prisoners to sacrifice to the gods.
- The Mayas were well known for advanced maths and their calendars.
- The Maya traded goods with others groups in central and gulf-coast Mexico. They traded goods such as cacao, salt, sea shells, jade and obsidian (volcanic glass).
- Priests were very important in Maya society as it was believed that they could communicate directly with the gods.