

Did you know The Mayans loved chocolate?

In this unit, we will be comparing with British society in Saxon times the Maya were in many ways more advanced. Secondly, it gives due weight to other world societies so that pupils experience a balance of local British, European and world topics. It is important to look at societies before encounters with Europeans. Finally, it allows pupils to compare this with earlier ancient civilizations such as Egypt which is often taught to younger pupils, thus providing a context for showing progression in understanding characteristic features of past societies.

In this unit children will:

- Explore where and when the remains of the Mayan civilisation were discovered.
- Find out about how the Mayan civilisation developed over time.
- Find out about the city states of Maya and how the society was organised.
- Find out about the Mayan religion and beliefs and how this affected life at time.
- Find out about everyday life for the Mayan people and how this compares to life today and other history we know about.
- Explore Mayan writing and calendars.
- Find out about the decline of the Mayan civilisation.

Prior Learning

Year 1 - Timelines

Year 2 – Historical figures

Year 3 – Ancient Egypt

Year 4 – The Romans, Ancient Greece

Cross Curricular Links

Fables, myths and legends

North and South America

Key Vocabulary

astronomy – The Mayans were able to predict solar eclipses and used observatories and shadow-casting devices.

Mesoamerica – The region in which the Maya lived spanning over Mexico and parts of Southern America.

calendar – These were circular and charted movements of the sun, moon, stars and planets, with 365 days in a year.

hieroglyphs – They used about 800 symbols to create writing, often folding pages to form a book (codex).

Kings/Queens – The King/Queen was thought to be given the right to rule by the Gods. Each city had a place for them.

maize – The staple food of the Mayans which was so important that they even had a maize God.

Number system – Using a base 20 system, they used dots and bars to create numbers.

pok-a-tok – A game where large rubber balls were aimed at stone hoops. Losers were sometimes sacrificed to the Gods.

pyramids – Built with a temple at the top to give sacrifices to the Gods, others were built for the gods themselves.

sacrifice – Humans and animals were used as a blood offering to Gods, mostly war prisoners by decapitation or heart removal.

stelae – Stone monument glorifying Kings and record his deeds, although early examples were of mythical scenes.

Key Questions

- Why do you think we study The Mayan Empire at school?
- When the area they lived in was mainly jungle how on earth were the Maya able to grow so strong?
- What was life like at the height of the Mayan civilization?
- How can we possibly know what it was like there 1,000 years ago?
- If the Maya were so civilized, why then did they believe in human sacrifice?
- How can we solve the riddle of why the Mayan empire ended so quickly?



Fun Facts

- In 1,100BC the first Mayan **settlements** begin to appear in **Mesoamerica** along the Pacific Coast.
- **Mesoamerica** is a historical region and cultural area in North America. **Mayan cities** are still being discovered today!
- In 700BC, Mayan writing begins to develop through the form of **hieroglyphs**.

Substantive concepts

- ★ Trade
- ★ Settlement
- ★ Power

