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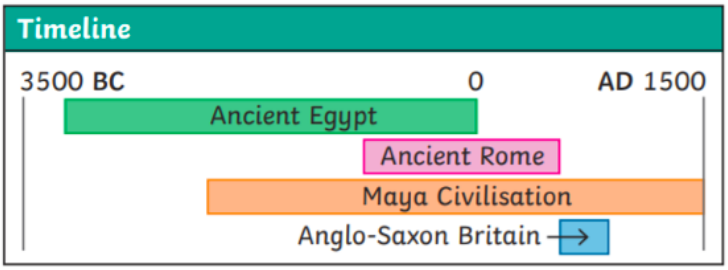
EBJ Knowledge Organiser History Year 5

Spring 2

The Maya Civilisation

Maya Civilisation



The Maya were an ancient civilisation who lived in Central America over 1,000 years ago. They built large stone cities with temples and pyramids, even without using metal tools. The Maya were very clever at maths and astronomy, and they created calendars to track time and the stars. They also developed their own writing system using symbols called glyphs. The Maya farmed crops like maize (corn), beans and squash, which helped their cities grow.

Key Events

2000 BC	The Maya civilisation comes into being in Central America.
300 BC	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 and extensively document what they find, 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.

Ancient Mayan Masks

Ancient Maya used masks for a wide variety of reasons. The main material was wood, but other materials include: gold, jade, shell and obsidian! Event masks were bright, vibrant and were designed on heavenly animals. Death masks were the most sacred and protected the person into the afterlife.

Religion

The Maya believed in and worshipped a number of different gods. They believed that the gods had a good side and a bad side and that the gods could help or hurt them. The Maya would dance, sing and sometimes make offerings of blood to the gods. Priests were very important in the Maya society as it was believed that they could communicate directly with the gods. They would perform different rituals during festivals or special ceremonies in order to appeal to the gods.

Inventions

✔ The number 0. Maya was one of very few civilisations to discover the idea of 0 in counting.

✔ Hot Chocolate! Using cacao beans, Ancient Maya made a hot drink. It was bitter though.

✔ A Calendar - Ancient Maya invented a calendar up to 2012!

✔ Writing! Maya used hieroglyphs to communicate ideas.

Did you know?

Maya's most famous game is 'Pok-a-Tok'. The game was sometimes used to settle disputes instead of going to war. This ball game ends with a HUMAN SACRIFICE!

Key Vocabulary

Civilisation- An organisation with its own culture

Maize- Sweetcorn. A crucial crop to Ancient Maya. Often planted with beans.

Codices- Handwritten texts.