






Key Vocabulary		
Cenote		A natural pit or sinkhole, resulting when a collapse of limestone bedrock exposes groundwater.
City-state		An independent country that exists within the borders of another city.
Haab		Part of the Maya calendar system. The Haab was an astronomical system which was counted by tracking the movement of objects in space, especially the sun and Venus.
Kin		Kin means sun in the Mayan language.
Obsidian		A type of black or dark glass formed by cooling lava.
Glyph		A purposeful mark. The Mayans used to record events on stone.
Pre-classic period		This period stretches from the beginning of permanent village life (1000BC) to the start of the classic period (250 AD).
Post-classic pyramid		This period of time ran from 250 to 900 AD.
Pyramid		Structures built in the rainforests of Central America by the Mayan people. They were built to note essential points in the calendar as well as perform religious functions.
Tzolk'in		A period of 260 days in the Mayan calendar.
Cacao		Seeds from a tropical evergreen tree from which cacao and chocolate are made.
Primary source		Immediate, first-hand accounts of a topic from people who had a direct connection with it.
Secondary source		A source that was created later by someone who did not experience firsthand or participate in events in which the author is writing about.
Pok to pok		A ritual ball game of the Maya.
Hypothesis		An idea that is proposed for the sake of an argument.

**What was the Maya civilization?**

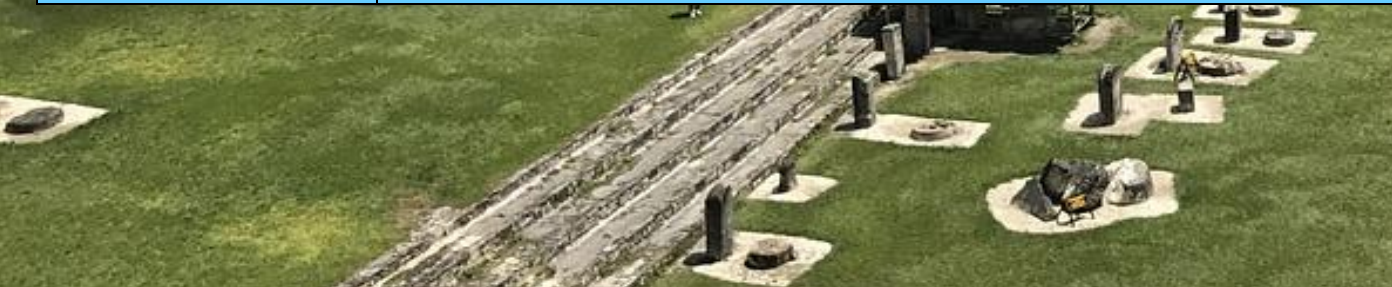
The ancient Maya civilisation existed in Central America, in an area that today includes Mexico (Yucatan Peninsula), Guatemala, Belize and parts of Honduras and El Salvador.

The Mayan civilization was well-established by 1000 BC and lasted until 1607 AD. All Maya people shared a common culture and religion but each city governed itself and had its own noble ruler. At its height, Maya civilization consisted of more than 40 cities, each with a population between 5,000 to 50,000.


























Important Mayan cities we can still see today include:

- Chichen Itza (its name means 'Brim of the well where the wise men of the water live'),
- Palenque (one of the monuments here includes 'Temple of the Inscriptions' which contains an elaborate tomb for King Pacal, who was king for 68 years),
- Tikal (this was occupied by the Maya for 1,500 years and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site).



**What was the Maya number system like?**

The Maya developed an advanced number system for their time. They were one of only two cultures in the world to develop the concept of zero as a placeholder. The number system used three symbols in different combinations – 0 was represented as a shell, 1 was represented by a dot and 5 as a bar. Numbers after 19 are written vertically in multiples of 20.

	= 0	0	1	2	3	4
	= 1					
	= 5					
		10	11	12	13	14
						
		15	16	17	18	19
						

**What was the Maya religion like?**

The Ancient Maya believed in many gods and goddesses. They thought these gods/goddesses had a good side and a bad side and that they could help or hurt them. The Maya people would dance, sing and make offerings to the gods/goddesses. Maya priests were believed to be able to communicate directly with the gods/goddesses. As a result, they were very important in society.

Examples of important Gods and Goddesses included: Itzamna – the creator God,  
 Chaac – rain God,  
 Yum Kaax – the nature God.



**What was Ancient Maya food like?**

The Ancient Maya diet consisted mainly of maize, squash and beans (the ‘Three sisters’) and chili peppers. Maize was considered the most important as the Maya believed the first humans were made from maize dough by the Gods. They ground it up and made tortillas to wrap meat and beans in.



The Maya made a bitter chocolatey drink from cacao beans that was enjoyed by the rich. It was used for medicines and in ceremonies. Cacao beans were highly valued and even used as a form of money.



**Timeline**

