

# YEAR 5: AUTUMN 2 – TIME COP: SOLVING MYSTERIES OF AN ANCIENT WORLD

## HISTORY: THE ANCIENT MAYA CIVILISATION

### CHRONOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING: THE ANCIENT MAYA CIVILISATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA (MESOAMERICA)

To develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of a non-European society that provides contrasts with British history:	KYA = thousand years ago (4kya = 4000 years ago)	BC = Before Christ	AD = Anno Domini 'In the year of our Lord'	<i>Maya civilisation</i> 1100BC – 1542AD	<i>Mayans</i>	<i>Mesoamerica</i>	<i>Central America</i>	<i>Mexico</i>
	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Mayan culture</b>	<b>Sacrifice</b>	<b>Hunter-gatherer</b>	<b>Homo-sapiens</b>	<b>Civilisations</b>	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Technology</b>

#### Learning links:

#### Enquiry:

Y3-6 Science

Y3-6 History

**Year 3: Ancient Egypt (3100BC – 30BC)**  
Compare the similarities and differences in lifestyle and civilisation at similar times in various locations in the world

**Year 4: Roman Britain (43AD – 410AD)**  
Compare the similarities and differences in lifestyle and civilisation at similar times in various locations in the world

**Year 4: Ancient Greeks (3000BC – 30BC)**  
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### The Ancient Mayan Timeline:

The *Maya civilisation* began long ago in a place called '*Mesoamerica*'. This huge area is made up of *Mexico* and part of *Central America*.

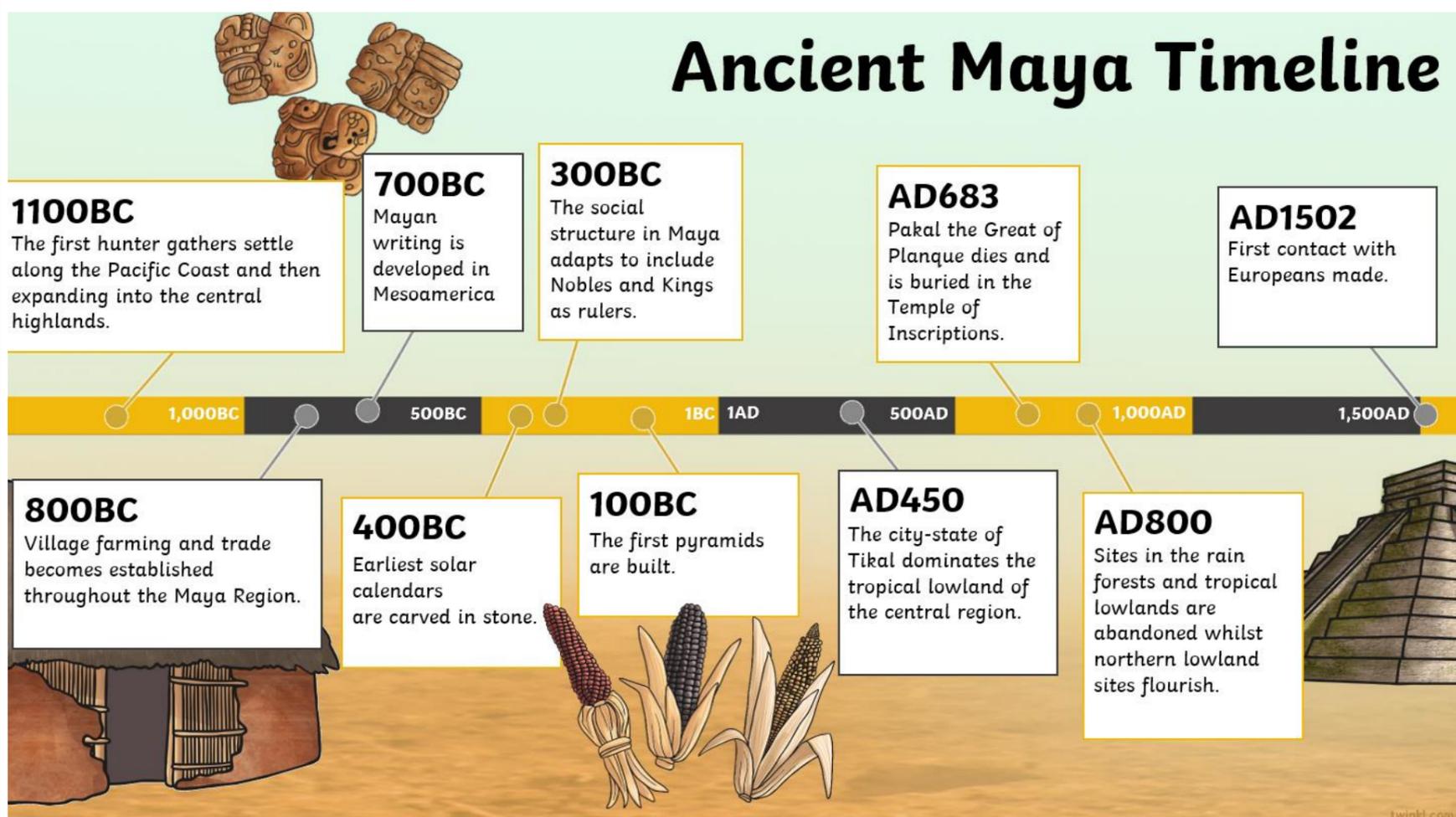
The *Maya* built amazing *cities* like *Tikal* (which they called 'Yax Mutal') and *Palenque*. Even though they lived in different cities, *ruled* by *different kings* and *queens*, the *Mayas shared* a lot of *common beliefs* and *traditions*.

They were *experts* at *reading the stars* and even *built* their *cities* as a *map of the sky*! They were also *inspired* by the *creatures* of the *forest* and shared many *legends about animals, plants* and *nature spirits*.

*Mayan culture* was *well established* by *1100BC*, and it lasted until *1542AD (that's 2642 years!)* All *Maya shared a common culture* and *religion*, but each *city governed itself* and had its *own noble ruler*. These *cities never came together* to form a *single empire*. *Mayan kings* were *constantly at war* with each other, *fighting* for *tribute* (gifts) and *prisoners* to *sacrifice* to the *gods*.



## Ancient Maya Timeline



In *1,100BC*, at roughly the same time as *early humans (homo-sapiens)* were *occupying Britain* during the *British Bronze and Iron Age* (Year 3), the *Maya civilisation* was being developed by *homo-sapiens* living in *central America*.

As the *Roman Empire colonised* and *occupied* most of *Europe* and *Britain* in *43AD – 410AD*, the *Maya* were creating and *developing* their own *cultures, civilisations* and *lifestyles* in *central America*.

Considering that the *Maya*, the *Celts* and the *Romans* were all the *same species* (*homo-sapiens*), it is particularly *interesting* to *compare* the *lifestyles* and *cultures* of the *Maya* with the *Celts* and *Romans*.

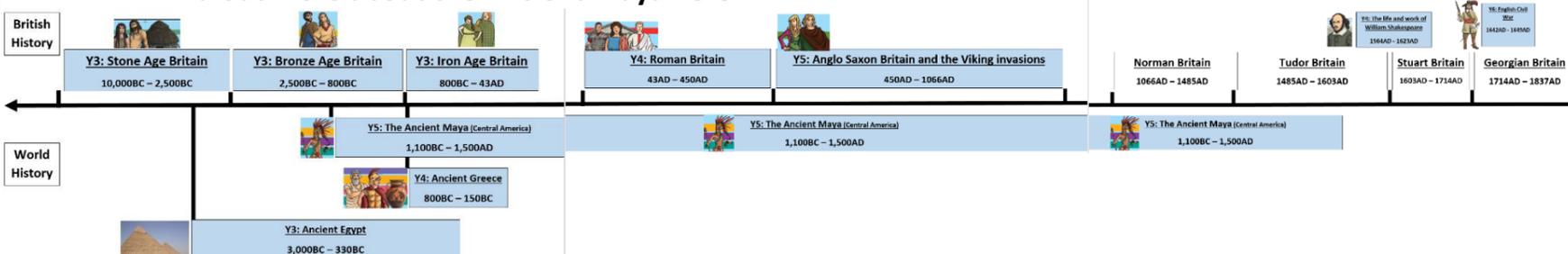
*How* were their lifestyles, culture and technology *similar* and *different* considering that they would have *never met*?

*How* and *why* were there *similarities* or *differences* between these *civilisations* which were built at the *same time in history* by the *same species*?

The *Maya civilisation* was *prominent* in *Central America* for nearly *2,700 years* until the early *1500's* when the *Maya* were *discovered* by *Spanish explorers*. After many years of battles and *invasion*, the *Spanish* eventually *conquered Central America* in *1542AD* spelling the end for *Mayan civilisation*.



### Find out more about the Ancient Maya here:



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Lifestyle	Civilisation	Temples	Pyramids	Rainforests	Highlands	Lowlands	Settlement
Palace	Plaza	Marketplace	Pyramid	Religious structure	Observing	Observatory	Preserved

## Ancient Mayan Lifestyle:

The **Maya** were an extremely **successful civilisation** and were highly **advanced** in **writing, art** and **science**. **Temples** and **pyramids** can still be **seen today** in the **rainforests** of **Mesoamerica** (Central America).

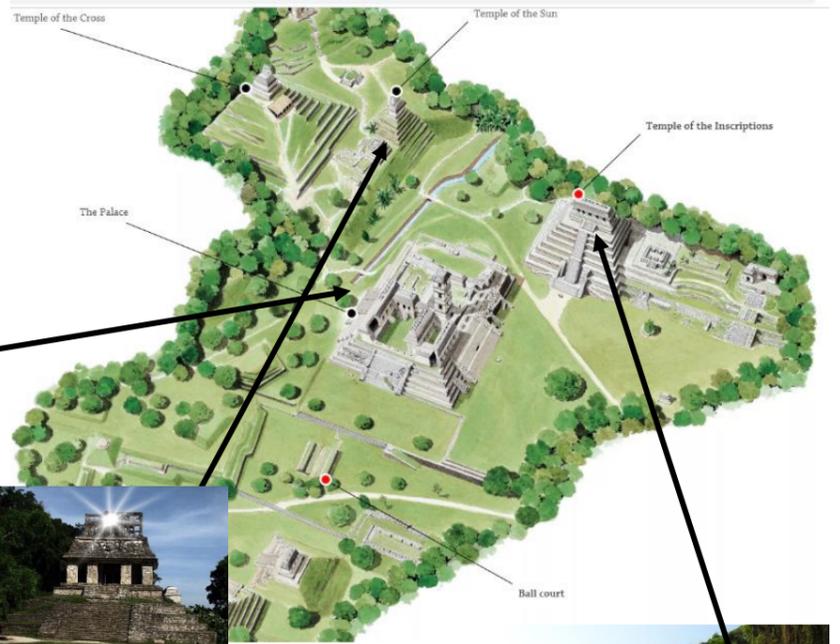
**Mesoamerica** was made up of **mountains, coasts** and **rainforests**. The **lowlands** were **near the sea** and the **highlands** were in the **mountains**. By **250BC**, most **Mayans** began to **settle** in the **lowlands**. Similar to the **Romans** having impact on **Britain** as it is today (Year 4), parts of **ancient Mayan heritage** is still **present** in **Central America** today.

### Mayan Civilisation and Settlements: Palenque

The **Maya** erected hundreds of **ceremonial cities** in the **rainforests** of **Mesoamerica**. These **cities** were **designed** in a **similar pattern**. There was a **palace** for the **ruler**, a **plaza** for the **marketplace**, and several **giant stone step pyramids**. The cities **shared** the same **culture**, but **remained separate** from each other. There was **never** a **single Mayan empire**, but rather a **widespread, interconnected civilization**. The Mayan city of **Palenque**, shown here, is a well-**preserved site**. The **Maya** first **settled** here as early as **100BC** and the city reached its **peak** between **600AD–800AD**.

Huge **palaces** and **pyramids** were **built** with **religious structures** on top of them as the Maya believed that this brought them **closer to the gods**.

Some **pyramids** were also used for **observing the Sun, moon and stars**. The **movement** of these was very **important** to the **Maya**.



### The Palace:

Standing on a raised platform, the palace is a complex of courtyards, corridors and rooms. It is distinguished by a high tower that probably served as an observatory or look-out post.

### The Temple of the Sun:

The Temple of the Sun is one of the best preserved buildings on the site of Palenque. The temple is on a four-level pyramid. It has a prominent roof comb (a huge carved stone slab).



### The Temple of the Inscriptions:

The **Temple of the Inscriptions** is situated in the **Mayan city of Palenque**, in the **midst of a tropical jungle**. Hidden in the pyramid was the **funeral chamber of King Pakal**, who ruled for 68 years. He was **buried** in this **magnificent resting place** in **683 CE**. The king's **sarcophagus** (stone **coffin**) contained some of the most **beautiful jade objects** ever found in **Mesoamerica**. This temple got its name from the **inscriptions (carved glyphs)** that can be seen on the **temple walls**.



### Housing:

**Kings** and **important people** would have **lived** within the **palace** at the **centre** of the **settlement**. The **common people** and **peasants** would have **lived** in very **simple houses** made from **wood** with **thatched roofs**. The houses were **built on platforms** made from **stone** or dirt to keep them **safe from flooding**. It is these **platforms** which have been **found as evidence** for the houses. The **dead** of each family would be **buried under the platforms** of their family home.



### Lost Cities of Maya:

**Palenque:** Situated in what is now **Chiapas in Mexico**, the city of **Palenque** was named by **Spanish explorers**. It was actually called, '**Lakam Ha**' by the ancient **Maya** which means '**big water**' due to its many **streams**. Though **abandoned** and **empty** now, **thousands** of people **once lived there**. We now understand lots about the city because of the **buildings** and **glyphs** **left behind**.



**Tikal:** The city of **Tikal** is in what is now **Northern Guatemala**. Up to **60,000 people** once lived there. The **city** was in **control** of several **smaller cities** and was in a **war of power** with the city of **Calakmul**.



**Tonina:** In the **same state** as **Palenque**, **Tonina** was one of **Palenque's great rivals**. The **two cities** were **engaged in many wars** together. **Tonina** was one of the **last southern Maya cities to exist**.

### What did the Mayans eat?

The **Maya** civilization ate **simple food**. **Maize** was the **central** food in their **diet**, along with **vegetables** such as **beans** and **squashes**. **Potatoes** and a tiny grain called **quinoa** were commonly **grown**. **Avocados** and **tomatoes** were also grown and eaten along with a wide variety of **fruit**. **Maize** was made into a sort of **porridge**, called '**atole**' in **Mesoamerica**. **Maize cakes** were eaten in both regions, but only the **Mesoamerican** peoples ate **maize pancakes**, known as **tortillas**, with **every meal**.



**Hunting** and **fishing** were **important** for the Incas, Aztecs, and **Maya** civilizations. **Meat** and **fish** were part of the **diet**. In **Mesoamerica** (the region of Mexico and Central America once occupied by the Maya, Aztecs, and other related cultures), the **largest animals** were the **peccary** (a relative of the **pig**) and the **deer**. The animals were **hunted** with **bows** and **arrows**. **Dogs**, **rabbits**, and other **small animals** were also **eaten**. People in **Mesoamerica** also got **meat** from **raising animals** such as **ducks** and **turkeys**. The Incas, Aztecs, and **Maya** **fished** for everything from **shellfish** to **large fish** and **sea mammals** using **nets**, **harpoons** (long spears), fish **hooks**, and sometimes **bows and arrows**.



### Mayan Farming:

The **Maya** learned how to **clear forests** and turn this space in to **farmland**. The **forests** were **burned** and the **ash** was used to **fertilise** the **ground**. This **technique** is called '**slash and burn**' and is still used in **farming today**. The **Maya** farmed **numerous crops** including **avocado**, **beans**, **squash**, **corn** and **maize**. **Corn** was the **staple** of their **diet** and was used in many **different ways**. **Ground** and made in to **flatbreads (tortillas)**, **fermented** in to a **beer**, or **cooked** as a **porridge**. It was mainly the **job** of the **Mayan peasants** to **clear the forests** for **farming**.



### The Precious Cacao:

One of the many **crops** that the **Maya** farmed was the **fragrant cacao bean**. These **beans** grew on **trees** from the soils of **El Salvador**, **Guatemala** and **Belize**. They were a **precious** crop; **prized** for their **chocolatey** flavour and used in **drinks** for the **rich** and **noble**. **Unsweetened cacao** is deeply **bitter** and the Maya would **spice** it up with some **chillies**; a **drink** still enjoyed today! The **cacao bean** was so **valuable** to the **Maya civilisation**; it was even used as **currency**.



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Ceramic  
Codices

Jade  
Rituals

Sacred  
Astronomy

Ulama  
Currency

Chichen Itza  
Mathematicians

Harvest  
Astronomers

Glyphs  
Haab

Stela(e)  
Tzolkin

## Ancient Mayan Lifestyle:

### Mayan Art and Craft:

The *Maya* produced some of the *finest art* from *Mesoamerica*. They used a *variety of materials*, such as *stone, wood, ceramics, jade*, and *bone* to *decorate* their *buildings* and to make *objects* that were either *sacred* or *served* a specific *function* (such as storing water). *Particularly striking* works of art are the *Maya's portraits of themselves*. These *portraits* help us to *understand* their *way of life*, methods of *warfare, costumes*, and *beliefs*.



### Ulama – a Mayan Ball Game:

The ball game *ulama* was played throughout *Mesoamerica*. As well as being a *sport*, it had a *religious significance*. Although there were *many versions* of the game, it was always played on a *court shaped* like a capital "*I*". *Two teams* would *compete* against each other to get a *large rubber ball* through a *stone ring*. The *ball* had to be *kept* off the *ground* using only *knees, elbows*, or *hips*, never the hands or feet. *Prisoners of war* were *forced* to play *ulama*, and the *losers* may have been *put to death*. The *largest ball court* has been found at *Chichén Itzá* in *Mexico*. *Every Mayan city* had an *Ulama ball court*. The *Maya believed* that the *more* they played *Ulama*, the *better* the *harvest* would be.



### The Mayan Writing System:

The *Maya* created a *writing system* using *symbols* called *glyphs*. Each *symbol* represented a *word* or a *sound*. *Glyphs* were used to *record events* on *stone slabs* called *stelae*. The *Maya* also created *books*, known as *codices*. These were *made* from *soft inner bark* and *folded like a fan*. The *four Mayan codices* that still *exist today* tell us little of their history, but deal mainly with subjects such as *rituals, astronomy*, and *calendars*.



Mayan Meanings					
Mayan: chan	winik	witz	k'in	b'alam	k'ak'
Meaning: sky	person	mountain	sun	jaguar	fire
Mayan: bak	way	juun	ja'	ajaw	muyal
Meaning: bone	spirit	book	water	lord	cloud
Mayan: ix	ch'am	k'uk'	chan	ch'ul	chok
Meaning: woman	to grab	quetzal	snake	holy	to scatter
Mayan: jaab	yax	pakal	tok	naj	k'al
Meaning: year	blue/green	shield	flint	house	twenty

*Mayan* books are known as *codices*. *Codices* were *written* or *painted* with *fine brushes* onto *long strips* of *bark paper* that were *folded like screens*. They often used *drawings* (or pictograms) to *represent objects* and *ideas*. Only the most *educated people* in *society* could *read* these *written records*. There are *three Mayan codices* known to have *survived* to the *present day*. The *Mayan writing system* had approximately *700 glyphs*.

### The Mayan Number System:

The ancient *Maya* created their own *number system* using only a few *symbols* to *represent numbers*. Their *system* was based on the *number 20* and they were one of the first *civilisations* of people to devise and *represent* the *number zero*. With these *symbols*, the *Maya* were able to do *sums*, record *dates* on calendars, *trade* with a form of *currency* and keep track of their *history* and *culture*.



0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20

### The Mayan Calendar:

The *Maya* were *expert mathematicians* and *astronomers*. They used their *studies* to *devise calendars*. The *Mayan calendar* was *highly complex* and it was also used by other *Mesoamerican people*. The *Maya* followed a *52-year Calendar Round*. This resulted from *two calendar cycles*, the *Haab* and the *Tzolkin*, which acted at the *same time* but were *independent* of each other. The *two cycles* reached the same point after a period of *52 years*. For periods longer than 52 years, the *Maya* used a *separate system* called the *Long Count*. The planet of *Venus* was important to the *Maya*. They *accurately tracked* its *movements* and *timed* their *wars* to *happen alongside* its first *appearance* in the *morning sky*.



# TO UNDERSTAND AND DESCRIBE: MAYA CIVILISATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA (MESOAMERICA)

To understand and describe a non-European society that provides contrasts with British history:	<i>Creation</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Sacrifice</i>	<i>Ancestors</i>	<i>Ritual</i>	<i>Bloodletting</i>	<i>Obsidian</i>	<i>Warfare</i>
	<i>Popul Vuh</i>	<i>Itzamnaaj</i>	<i>Kukulcan</i>	<i>Ix Chel</i>	<i>K'nich Ajaw</i>	<i>Ah Puch</i>	<i>Chaak</i>	<i>Hun Ixim</i>

## Ancient Mayan Beliefs and Religion:

### The Mayan Creation Story:

There were **two stages** in the **creation** story in **Maya** belief. The **first creation** was of a world with **animals** and the **second** was a world with **humans**. In the world of animals created, the **gods** were **unsatisfied** that the **animals** could **not speak** and wanted to make some **better beings** who could **worship them properly** and **speak to them** so they decided to make them out of **clay**. However, the **clay** men were soon **rained on** and they all **were washed away**. They then tried using **wood** but that made some really **cold, empty men**. On their 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt, they decided to use a **paste** made from **maize** and **water** (maize for the **flesh** and water for the **blood**) and the men turned out to be **perfect**. They created **4 men** and **4 women**.



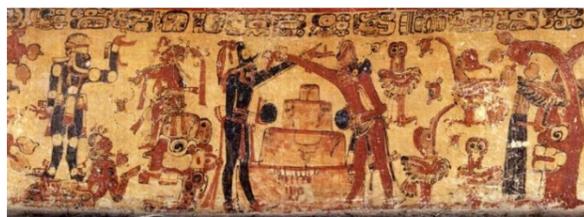
### The Mayan Beliefs and Religion:

The **Maya** believed that their **rulers** could **communicate** with the **gods** and their dead **ancestors** through the **ritual** of **bloodletting**. It was a **common** practice for the **Maya** to **pierce** their **tongue, lips, or ears** with **stingray spines** and pull a **thorny rope** through their **tongue**, or **cut themselves** with an **obsidian** (stone) **knife**. The **Maya** also **offered** the **blood** of **prisoners** captured in **warfare**. They **fought wars** in order to **capture** high-ranking **prisoners** who could be **sacrificed** to **satisfy** the **gods**. **Mayan kings** were the **most important priests**. They were seen as the **link** between **humans** and **gods**, and when the **kings died** they themselves became **gods**.



### The Popul Vuh:

The **Popul Vuh** was the **religious book** of the **Mayan** civilisation. Stories of **creation** and **life** were written in this book and shared with the people.



### The Mayan Gods:

The **Maya** thought the world was **divided** into **three parts**: The **Heavens**, the **Earth**, and the **Underworld**, which were **linked together** by a **giant World Tree**. **Mayan religion** focused on a **number of gods** who were **associated** with the **natural world**. The **Mayan civilisation** believed that the **Sun** would **not continue** its journey **across the sky** if they did not make **human sacrifices**. **Special ceremonies** were held in **temples** to make these **sacrifices**. **Victims** usually included **men, women, and children**, but also sometimes **animals**. **Mayan kings** were also thought to become **gods** after **death**.



	<b>Itzamnaaj:</b> The <b>supreme god</b> , he was the <b>creator of mankind</b> and invented <b>writing</b> and <b>learning</b> . He was depicted as a toothless old man and was always kind; unlike some other gods.		<b>Kukulcan:</b> Known as the Feathered Serpent, he is the god of the four elements: water, air, fire and earth.
	<b>Ix Chel:</b> The wife of Itzamnaaj. She is the goddess of childbirth, healing, weaving and the moon. She has a snake in her hair and her toes are like jaguar claws.		<b>K'nich Ajaw:</b> The sun god or sun-faced lord travels across the sky during the day. At night, he becomes the fearful Jaguar god and enters the Underworld.
	<b>Chaak:</b> A descendant of Itzamnaaj and Ix Chel. He is the god of storms and rain. He has fangs of a reptile and a curling snout.		<b>Ah Puch:</b> The god of death. He is the most gruesome god as he has a skeletal nose, jaw and spine and his body is covered in hideous spots.
	<b>Hun Ixim:</b> Another child of Itzamnaaj and Ix Chel, Hun Ixim is the maize god. From his head sprouts an ear of corn. He is very important to the Mayan people as maize is such a vital source of food.		

## KEY ASSESSMENT AND APPLICATION OPPORTUNITIES:

### EXS:

When did the Mayan civilisation begin and end?  
 Why did the Maya civilisation come to an end?  
 Where was the Ancient Maya civilisation?  
 Describe the typical diet of a Mayan?  
 Identify 4 things that was impressive about Mayan culture.  
 Explain the importance and uses of the palace and temples of Maya.  
 What did the Mayans believe about the World?  
 How did life in Ancient Maya differ to that of Roman Britain?  
 How was life in Ancient Maya similar to Roman Britain?  
 'The Maya lived peacefully.' Do you agree? Justify your opinion with evidence. (Added Jan 20)  
**EXIT QUESTION:** Describe 4 things that were important to the Mayans.

### GDS:

What lasting impressions did the Mayans leave on Central America and why do you think that they have lasted?  
 Explain how the Mayan calendar works and how it was created.  
 How was life in Ancient Maya similar or different to that of Roman Britain?  
 Considering that they were both the same species, why do you think this is?  
 If the Gods were angered, the Maya believed the sun would not rise. If this happened, how would it affect Maya life? (Added Jan 20)  
 How can archaeology help us to understand Mayan settlements? (Added Jan 20)  
 What did the Mayans believe about the World? Who made this up and why would they do this?  
**EXIT QUESTION:** If you were an archaeologist and had found a site of the remains of a Mayan town, what would you expect to find?