

YEAR 5: SPRING 1 – 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:

Chronological order	BC = Before Christ	AD = Anno Domini 'In the year of our Lord'	Maya civilisation 1100BC – 1542AD	Mayans	Mesoamerica	Central America	Mexico
Timeline	Mayan culture	Sacrifice	Hunter-gatherer	Homo-sapiens	Civilisations	Culture	Technology

The Ancient Maya 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**.



Learning links:

Enquiry:

Y3-6 Science

Y3-6 History

Year 3: Ancient Egypt (3100BC – 30BC)

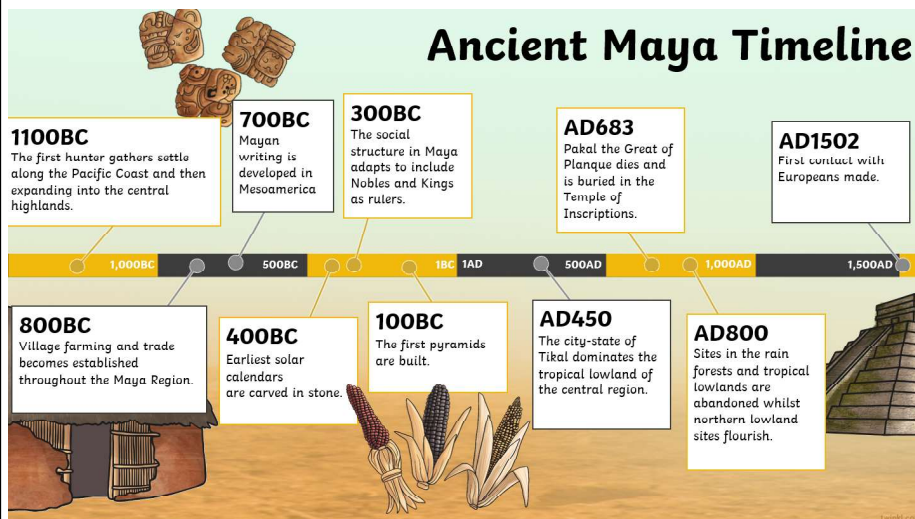
Compare the similarities and differences in lifestyle and civilisation at similar times in various locations in the world

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)

Compare the similarities and differences in lifestyle and civilisation at similar times in various locations in the world



THINKING POINT:



Where was the Maya Civilisation?

Was Ancient Maya ruled over by one leader, as in Ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece?

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

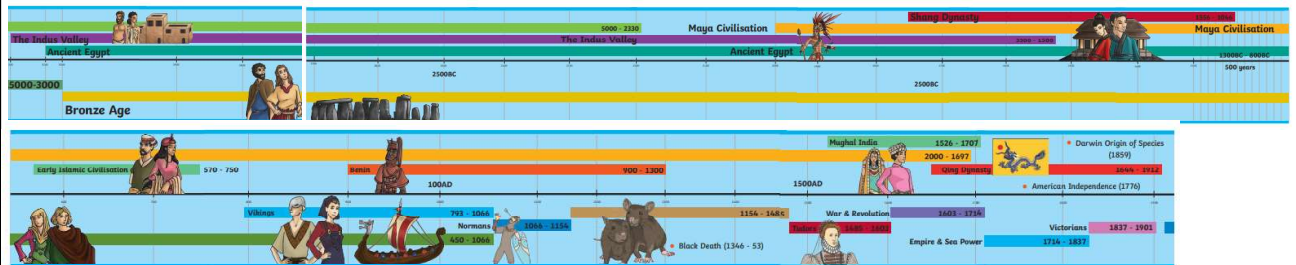
As the **Roman Empire colonised** and **occupied** most of **Europe** and **Britain** in **43AD – 410AD**, the **Maya** were creating and **developing** their own **cultures, civilisations and lifestyles** in **central America**.

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**.



THINKING POINT:

What other ancient and more recent civilisations existed at the same time as the Maya?



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

To understand and describe a non-European society that provides contrasts with British history:

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- Y3-6 Science
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Lifestyle	Civilisation	Temples	Pyramids	Rainforests	Highlands	Lowlands	Settlement
Palace	Plaza	Marketplace	Pyramid	Religious structure	Observing	Observatory	Preserved

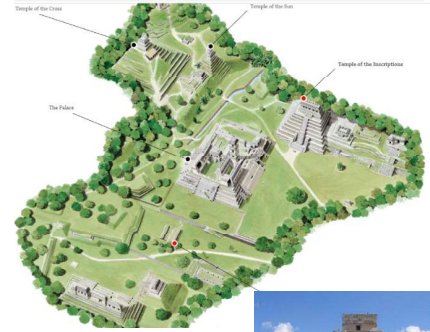
Ancient Mayan Lifestyle:

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**.

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*.



Chichén Itzá

Chichén Itzá is another large *Mayan city* famous for a large, **pyramid temple**. The **temple**, called **Castillo**, is about 1 km in **diameter**. It is dedicated to **Kukulcan**, the Plumed Serpent. Every year on the autumn and spring **equinox**, the sun hits the side of the building making a show of light and shadow which looks like a snake along the steps of the building. There are also the remains of the **'Great Ballcourt'**, where the *Mayan* sport **'pok-ta-pok'** would have been played. There is also **'The Cenote'**. This is an underground lake or river. This Cenote is where royalty gave gifts to the gods, which included human sacrifices..

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.



THINKING POINT:

What would you find in a Mayan city?



What is different about a common Mayan's home and our homes today?

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**.



THINKING POINT:

Name 3 things Mayans ate.



What was the most precious crop that the Maya grew?

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>Ceramic</i>	<i>Jade</i>	<i>Sacred</i>	<i>Pok-ta-pok</i>	<i>Chichen Itza</i>	<i>Harvest</i>	<i>Glyphs</i>	<i>Stela(e)</i>
<i>Codices</i>	<i>Rituals</i>	<i>Astronomy</i>	<i>Currency</i>	<i>Mathematicians</i>	<i>Astronomers</i>	<i>Haab</i>	<i>Tzolkin</i>

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*.



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Pok-ta-pok – a Mayan Ball Game:

The ball game *pok-ta-pok* 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. The *largest ball court* has been found at *Chichén Itzá* in *Mexico*. *Every Mayan city* had an *pok-ta-pok ball court*. The *Maya believed* that the *more* they played *pok-ta-pok*, the *better* the *harvest* would be.



THINKING POINT:

What did the Mayans do to entertain themselves?



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

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*.



THINKING POINT:

How did the Mayans record things?



Ancient Mayan Beliefs and Religion:

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*.

	Itzamnaaj: The <i>supreme god</i> , he was the <i>creator</i> of <i>mankind</i> and invented <i>writing</i> and <i>learning</i> . He was depicted as a toothless old man and was always kind; unlike some other gods.		Kukulcan: Known as the Feathered Serpent, he is the god of the four elements: water, air, fire and earth.
	Ix Chel: 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.		K'nich Ajaw: 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.
	Hun Ixim: 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.		Ah Puch: 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.

THINKING POINT:

What were the Mayans' main beliefs?



EXS:

What would the day-to-day life of a common Mayan look like? Justify your answer using evidence from a range of sources.

GDS:

Can you identify any similarities between the Mayans and other ancient civilisations? Justify your answer using evidence from a range of sources.