

Key Knowledge:

Ancient Maya

The Ancient Maya were an ancient people living in Central America from around 2000BC to 1500AD.

Religion

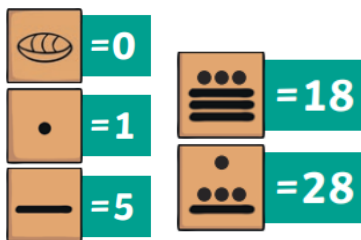
The Maya believed in and worshipped a number of different gods. They believed that the gods had a good side and a bad side and that the gods could help or hurt them. The Maya would dance, sing and sometimes make offerings of blood to the gods. Priests were very important in Maya society as it was believed 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.

Writing

The Maya writing system was made up of over 800 symbols called glyphs. Some glyphs were logograms, representing a whole word, and some were syllabograms, representing units of sound. They were carved onto stone buildings and monuments and painted onto pottery. Maya scribes also wrote books, called codices, made from the bark of fig trees. Only priests and noblemen would know the whole written language.



The Maya logogram for b'alam - jaguar



Maya Numbers

The Maya developed a complex number and counting system. They used just three symbols in their number system. These are thought to represent items that the Maya people might have first used to count with, such as pebbles, sticks and shells.

The Maya used a base 20 number system, so after number 19, multiples of 20 were written above the bottom number.

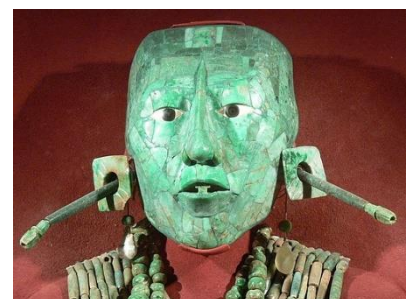
Key Vocabulary:

Civilisation	An organised society with its own culture and way of life, existing in a particular area over a particular period of time.
Drought	A long period with very little rain.
Ritual	A ceremony, often religious, with set actions performed in a set order.
Jaguar	A big cat with yellowish fur and black spots.
Scribes	People paid to write things down either as an official record or for someone else unable to write.
Codices	Ancient handwritten texts. Maya codices could be unfolded like a concertina. ON text is called a codex.
Maize	Another word for sweetcorn or corn on the cob.
Cacao beans	Cacao trees sprout pods directly from their trunks. When they are ripe, the pods can be broken open to reveal the beans, which can be dried, roasted and ground.

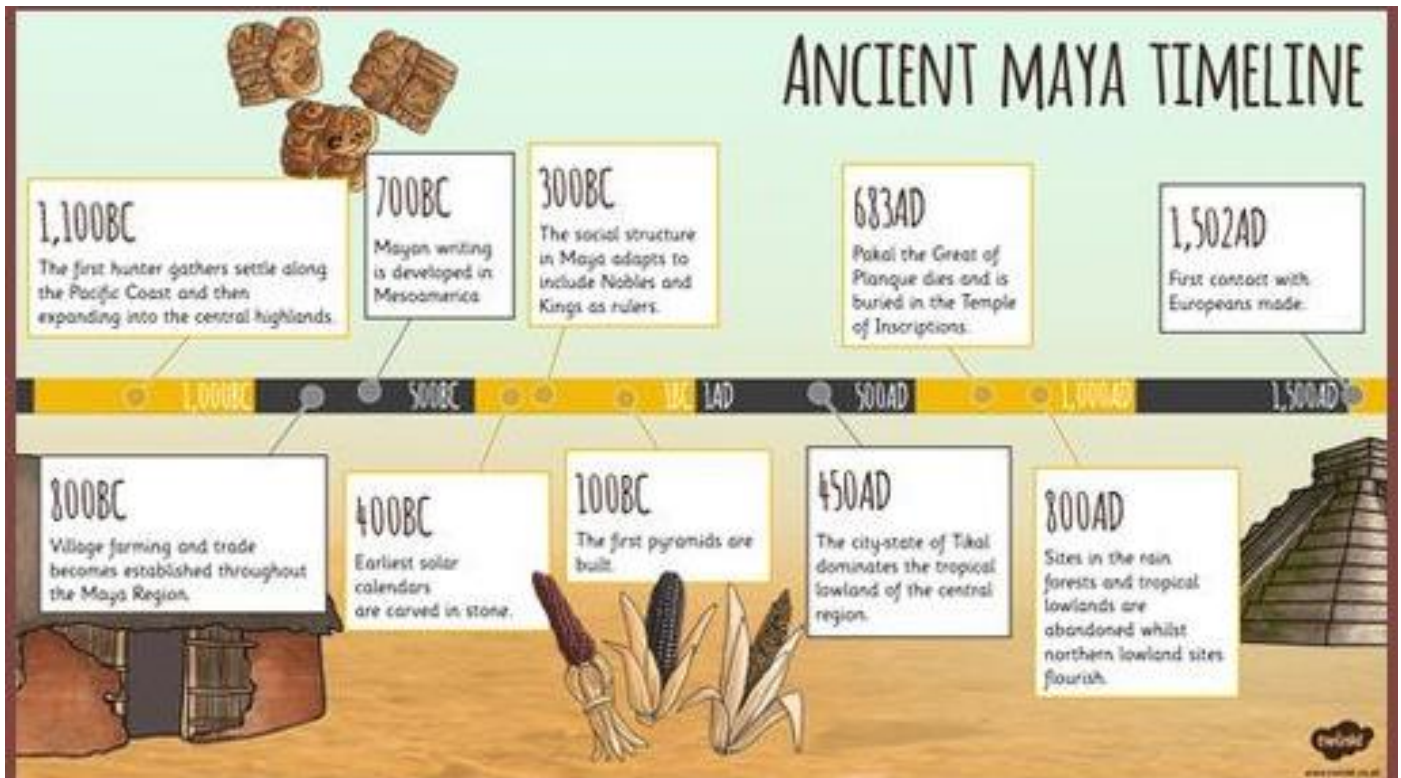
Significant People:

Pakal the Great

- Pakal was one of the greatest Maya rulers.
- He became king aged 12.
- He was king of Palenque for 68 years, longer than any other Maya ruler.
- He is believed to have sacrificed and eaten a rival ruler!
- He ordered the construction of many impressive Maya buildings, all aligned to the stars.
- He died in AD683.
- His tomb was discovered in 1948 by Mexican archaeologist, Alberto Ruz Lhuillier.



Timeline of Events:



Historical Skills and Enquiry:

- Use a range of sources to find out what life was like in Ancient Maya. Compare the accuracy of these sources.
- Describe different accounts of the lives of the Ancient Maya people (noblemen, scribes etc.).
- Explain how Central America changed over the course of the civilisation.
- Compare Ancient Maya kings and queens with modern rulers.
- Explain the importance of the discovery of Chichén Itzá.