

Who are the Mayans?

The Mayan civilization Year 5

There are three key ideas behind this unit's place on the curriculum. Primarily it is there to show pupils that by comparison with British society in Saxon times the Maya were in many ways more advanced. Secondly, it gives due weight to other world societies so that pupils experience a balance of local British, European and world topics. It is important to look at societies before encounters with Europeans. Finally, it allows pupils to compare this with earlier ancient civilizations such as Egypt which is often taught to younger pupils, thus providing a context for showing progression in understanding characteristic features of past societies.

Key questions <i>content coverage/key concepts</i>	Learning objectives	Teaching & Learning activities	Learning resources	Outcomes / assessment
<p>1 Why do you think we study the Mayan empire in school?</p> <p><i>OFSTED's recent report shows that pupils often don't know why they are studying a particular topic. This study starts with pupils trying to work this out for themselves, thereby raising interesting historical questions which they might like to investigate further in their home study.</i></p>	<p>Pupils are able to speculate and make deductions from a range of visual clues</p> <p>They appreciate the range of Mayan achievements realising that without the use of the cartwheelor metal tools, they built massive stone stepped pyramids and many large cities, some of 100,000 people</p> <p>They work out/ know that they must have been accomplished scientists as they tracked a solar year of 365 days, built observatories and knew about eclipses.</p> <p>They understand that the Maya developed their own mathematics, using a base number of 20, and had a concept of zero. They also had their own system of writing.</p> <p>Pupils know that the Mayan's greatest cities had 10,000s of inhabitants (possibly 200,000) and</p>	<p>Arouse pupils' interest with mysterious/slowly revealed images e.g. slide 2</p> <p>Teacher overview showing where and when the Mayan empire thrived. Recap using interactive timeline so pupils know how Mayan civilization relates to the historical periods they have already studied (Stone Age, Egyptians, Iron Age, Roman, Indus Valley, Saxons, Vikings etc.). Show also when the Spanish conquerors arrived 500 years after the height of the civilization: more than half the Mayan population died of new diseases brought by the Spanish.</p> <p><i>Timeteam</i> competition using <i>Timebox</i></p> <p>Gallery. Placed around the room are clues as to why the Mayan civilization was so special. Pupils work in teams to hunt the clues and make deductions. First to find 5 important reasons.</p>	<p>PowerPoint KQ1 slide 2 and 3</p> <p>Slide 4 and 5 give background of time and place</p> <p>Clues on PowerPoint slides 6-12 for gallery printed and 'hidden' around the room showing: Hieroglyphs, calendar, mathematics, architecture esp. pyramids, gods of sun, moon, rain, maize as well as images of important pyramids at Palenque, Uxmal, Copán, Tikal and Chichén Itzá which show how advanced their architecture was.</p> <p>Images for <i>Timebox</i> with labels on IWB or whiteboard/washing line/laminated fold out timeline.</p> <p>RS1 Time team competition activity For details of how to run <i>Timebox</i>, see the website's Teaching section/sub level chronology</p>	<p>Pupils have been commissioned to design a set of illustrated stamps to celebrate the Mayan achievements which they must finish by the end of the topic.</p> <p>Pupils start sketching some early ideas which they will refine later.</p>

	<p>that the civilisation lasted 2,000 years, and was at its height AD300-900. They built some of the largest cities in the world at the time. They were one of the most sophisticated societies of their age with a strong belief system.</p> <p>Pupils are able to predict with success what aspects a short educational video on the Maya would focus on. They know that we have the Maya to thank for the wonder of chocolate!</p>	<p>Spectrum Pupils place a series of given reasons why we should study the Maya on a spectrum ranging from BEST to WORST reason. This should be preceded by a discussion of what makes a society significant, referring back to Ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece where possible.</p> <p>Predict/critique the video. Pupils watch a 5 minute video which pupils critique. How well does it explain why we study the Maya?</p>	<p>RS2 Spectrum cards and RS4 template</p> <p>RS3 Critique the video</p> <p>https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/ancient-maya-ks2-quiz-12343562</p>	<p>Pupils write to the producer of the film saying what was good about it and what could be improved.</p>
<p>2 When the area they lived in was mainly jungle how on earth were the Maya able to grow so strong?</p> <p>This is a contentious area and historians cannot be sure so it is a quick overview type lesson</p>	<p>Pupils are able to offer at least 2 valid reasons for its growth e.g. Mayans knew how to grow crops like maize (slash and burn technique) and irrigate fields, and how to hunt e.g. for deer, and to trade.</p> <p>The more able grasp how many of these ideas must be speculative. More able can make links with growth of Roman Empire studied earlier and with Ancient Egypt which had the Gift of the Nile whereas the Maya had to contend with jungle and mountain.</p>	<p>Re-emphasise the terrain the Maya would have coped with by showing a map and photos of jungle conditions today.</p> <p>Activity : Diamond 4</p> <p>Pupils are given a range of ideas from which they create a Diamond 4. This involves them in discussing what they think is the most likely of the given reasons which they place at the top and the least important at the bottom. Throughout the short activity stress how amazing it was that the Maya managed to thrive in both the jungle and mountain environments, referring back to earlier maps.</p>	<p>PowerPoint KQ2</p> <p>RS1 Diamond 4 activity cards</p>	<p>Pupils compose a Tweet of just 140 characters in which they explain to another pupil who wants help with this question, what they think the answer should be.</p>
<p>3 What was life like at the height of the Mayan civilization?</p>	<p>Pupils grasp that artists' reconstructions are based on a mixture of physical evidence and imagination.</p>	<p>Having explained the structure of Mayan society using slide 2 of the ppt, Main activity:</p> <p>Ask pupils to create a Tour guide to a Mayan city from 800 AD.</p>	<p>PowerPoint KQ3 contains the images. Low-attaining pupils are given captions to match to images which help them focus on the key message. Mid-attainers have some captions for harder to</p>	<p>Pupils construct a tour guide description of daily life based on images shown. Look for references to pyramids, temples, lords, priests, human sacrifices, ball games as well as building temples, tending the fields, making objects. They should make it clear in their writing that this is a</p>

<p>The focus here is for pupils to write creatively but be disciplined by the evidence provided.</p> <p>This is an overview too.</p>	<p>Pupils are able to detect patterns in images of everyday life.</p> <p>Pupils use their creative imagination to reconstruct a typical city scape.</p> <p>They understand that society was hierarchical (king above craftspeople and merchants, then farmers, then slaves at the bottom) and can distinguish between palaces of the luxurious royal court and everyday life for common people who lived in wood and thatch huts and were concerned mainly with farming.</p> <p>Pupils grasp that Mayan cities had a dramatic stepped pyramid topped by a temple. Close by were the palaces of the royal court. As well as temples and plazas, ball courts have been found.</p> <p>Pupils grasp that lives of common people are very poorly recorded.</p>	<p>Pupils use a range of written sources and pictures to reconstruct in their minds what a Mayan city might have looked like e.g. no trees. They construct a description for themselves for a visitor going back to a Mayan city in AD 800. They concentrate specifically on</p> <p>SIGHTS SOUNDS SMELLS</p> <p>Start by showing PowerPoint slide 2 of one of the main plaza surrounded by gigantic temples. Discuss what would interest a visitor. Then discuss the sounds they might hear, using slide 3 which shows a music festival of drums and pipes.</p> <p>Invite ideas the pupils will have picked up from session 1 regarding sounds e.g. the ball court (cheering) and smells (chocolate and chilli cooking) - real scope here for pupils to be imaginative.</p> <p>Stress that the Mayan ruler was at the centre of life. His role on earth mirrored the role of the gods. Explain that the Mayan court included many people beyond the royal family. Show an image of an ordinary house, away from the temples from the PowerPoint.</p>	<p>interpret ones and most able work without captions.</p>	<p>hierarchical society so they must be clear who they are referring to: ruler, rich farmers or poor workers.</p>
<p>4 How can we possibly know what it was like there 1,000 years ago?</p>	<p>Pupils learn how to raise valid historical questions and to make inferences beyond the literal.</p> <p>Pupils grasp that we learn from:</p>	<p>Introduce story of exciting discovery of funerary mask of Pacal in 1950s. He became king in 615 when he was just 12. The PowerPoint focuses on Pacal's jade mask. Use the story provided to add fascinating detail about this find.</p>	<p>KQ4 RS 2 Story of Pacal</p> <p>PowerPoint KQ4 slide 2</p>	

<p>The emphasis for this in-depth section must be on helping pupils to interpret the astonishing evidence left behind and to explain how we were able to do this only very recently. Try to show the wide range of evidence.</p> <p>Maya writing has been found on monumental sculpture, public buildings, murals, pottery, portable objects (made of shell, obsidian, bone, wood, jade and other stones) and screenfold books, called codices. The inscriptions deal mainly with calendrical and astronomical information, and historical events such as alliances, wars, lineages and marriages.</p>	<p>Present day Maya peoples as well as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Archaeological remains •Spanish Conquest sources •Artefacts and hieroglyphs •Oral tradition <p>Pupils use their contextual knowledge of Mayan life to make plausible suggestions as to possible uses of mystery objects. They learn how to make deductions about the purpose of an object from its physical clues.</p> <p>Pupils understand that we have been able to decipher their glyphs only since the 1960s and there is still much we don't know.</p> <p>Pupils grasp that much of the Mayan's history was destroyed by the Spanish when they conquered this area in 16Cth, including most books and many buildings because they wanted to stamp out Mayan religious practices. Only 4 codices survived.</p>	<p>Now focus on deductions we make from evidence starting with just one.</p> <p>Killer activity Zones of inference relating to Maize god. Pupils are shown the image of the maize god without being told anything about it. They have to write down on RS2 what they can see/ then later, what they can work out and finally what they don't understand /need to know. RS1 provides most of the answers to likely questions. But the emphasis here is on encouraging pupils to pose their own questions. Use the audio clip to reveal what experts say about it.</p> <p>Then Call My Bluff. Pupils, working in groups of 4, are given a mystery object/picture of object and have to use their creative imaginations to think of 3 possible descriptions of what it might be. When they've finished, you provide the correct answer.</p> <p>Curator's dilemma There are lots of remains of the Mayan civilization in Guatemala and it takes a lot of money to keep them going. So the government has asked you to choose just 3 of the following 8 sites to keep developing and the other three will be closed until there is more money available. Pupils research named buildings as well as discovering others for themselves.</p> <p>Activity: Prove it. Pupils are given a differentiated set of statements about Mayan life and a set of images printed from the PowerPoint provided. Pupils</p>	<p>It is helpful to have a piece of corn on the cob as a visual aid to show the shape and the way the statue's hairs look like the fibres inside the wrapping leaves.</p> <p>RS1: Notes to help you prepare for pupils' questions on the maize god. RS3: Zones of inference activity sheet template .</p> <p>PowerPoint 4 Curator's dilemma has suggestions for the criteria pupils might use as well as a few stimulus images of the buildings for Curators dilemma. Teacher may well have images of their own from their own/friends'/families' travels. RS3 Template for curator's dilemma</p> <p>PowerPoint KQ4 Prove it! Images for Prove it from which pupils have to draw conclusions RS4 Differentiated statements 1-10 for prove it</p>	<p>Quality SPOKEN captions on maize god as if for 'History of the World in Hundred best objects' in 60 seconds. Pupils use interesting adjectives to describe the god's appearance e.g. serene.</p> <p>For Curator's dilemma, pupils write a persuasive letter to the Guatemalan authorities putting the case for spending the money for conservation on just 3 particular sites, explaining why.</p>
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<p>5 If the Maya were so civilized, why then did they believe in human sacrifice?</p> <p><i>NB There are sensitivities here that we need to be aware of. Tread carefully. You may want to restrict the images pupils see. None provided here show human sacrifice but there are some in books/websites.</i></p>	<p>Pupils are able to explain why human sacrifice was practised i.e. they appeased their gods with the human blood collected from the human sacrifice. Pupils will focus on the different Gods.</p> <p>Pupils are able to accord this ancient civilization dignity and respect.</p> <p>Pupils appreciate that over 1,000 years ago moral values were different in England too.</p>	<p>have to work out which sources helped historians make that judgement.</p> <p>They are then asked to discuss whether they think the Maya were highly civilized or not. They are shown a few examples of evidence that supports one side of the argument.</p> <p>Compare who was more civilized/advanced - The Mayan's or the Indus Valley Civilization?</p> <p>Activity Spectrum They then place on a spectrum from 'civilized' to 'not civilized' the ideas shown on the cards provided on RS1 that could be used in a debate.</p>	<p>PowerPoint KQ5 slide 2 Slides 3, 4 and 5 offer examples of evidence that pupils could use to prepare for a debate</p> <p>RS1 'Highly civilized or 'not civilized' spectrum cards RS2 Spectrum template</p>	<p>Pupils create 2 sets of speech bubbles (saying civilized/not civilized) placing at least 2 ideas in each</p>
<p>6 How can we solve the riddle of why the Mayan empire ended so quickly?</p> <p>By about AD 800 Mayan civilization was in decline. Building and monument-making stopped</p>	<p>Pupils understand that Mayan civilization was in decline at time of Saxon control in Britain.</p> <p>Pupils grasp that there are many competing explanations (e.g. drought, over-population, warfare, poor land, popular discontent, disease) and that it is difficult to be certain as to the reason, without written records.</p>	<p>Initially pupils predict what might be likely reasons, for that time.</p> <p>They are then given a range of written and visual clues from which to draw conclusions.</p> <p>History mystery. They then classify a range of influence cards which help them to make their own meaning.</p>	<p>KQ6 PowerPoint RS1 History mystery influence cards.</p>	<p>Written explanation in answer to key question</p> <p>"Having been so strong for so long, how can we explain why the Maya civilization suddenly came to an end?"</p>

<p>and in some places there is evidence of violence and destruction. The problems may have been caused by warfare and agricultural crisis. Despite this 'collapse', the Maya survived in reduced numbers. There are about six million Maya alive today.</p> <p>🔗 Home study task. This runs throughout the topic and allows pupils to select an aspect of Mayan life to investigate. Allow pupils to choose, probably more of the social history possibly the famous ball game, or possibly their myths, E.g Hero Twins; role of women. Make sure that all research leads to answering one key historical question.</p>	<p>They can make a plausible case for one or more reason from the evidence available. Some will instinctively want to classify and group ideas (e.g. too with less land/drought/increasing population).</p> <p>Pupils grasp that historical explanations are often provisional and that new evidence and research techniques cause explanations to be modified.</p> <p>They grasp that it was probably a combination of factors, rather than one factor alone. They learn to write in tentative language e.g. might/possibly and can refer to evidence when making their judgement.</p> <p>Pupils generate valid lines of enquiry for a topic of their choice. They carry out independent research providing answers to their questions. They learn to present their findings in a creative way.</p>	<p>They then evaluate 4 or 5 competing explanations in a game of Killer activity Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? before writing their own explanation</p>	<p>Range of pupil-friendly websites http://www.incamayanaztec.com/ancient-mayan-art.html http://mayas.mrdonn.org/index.html</p> <p>Modern Myths of the Ancient Maya. Mexicolore. http://www.mexicolore.co.uk/maya/home/modern-myths-of-the-ancient-maya</p>	
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