

MAYAN CIVILISATION- WOODPECKER CLASS

Key Vocabulary

civilisation	A human society with well developed rules and government, often where technology and the arts are considered important.
drought	A period of time with little or no rain.
scribes	People trained to write things down, either as an official record or for someone who is unable to write.
codices	Ancient handwritten texts. Maya codices could be unfolded like a concertina. One text is called a codex.
glyphs	symbols that made up the Mayan writing system.

Religion & Beliefs The Maya believed in many gods and goddesses. They thought that the 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.

Number System

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.



The Maya built cities, pyramids and ornate sculptures in the rainforest.



Key Dates

c. 2000BC - The Maya civilisation comes into being



AD 900 - Cities in the rainforest are abandoned due to a drought. People move north to the highlands of Guatemala and the Yucatán

AD 1000 - Cities like Chichén Itzá (has two temple pyramids) are still thriving.

1500s - The Spanish arrive in South America and set out to destroy the remaining elements of Maya civilisation as part of their conquest.

1839 - American explorer and writer, John Lloyd Stephens, and British artist, Frederick Catherwood, explore Copán and other cities including Chichén Itzá, reigniting interest in the Maya Civilisation

2014 - The cities of Lagunita and Tamchén are rediscovered.

Writing

The Maya writing system was used to write several different Maya languages. It was made up of many symbols called glyphs. Logograms are glyphs representing whole words. Syllabograms are glyphs representing units of sound (syllables). The glyphs were carved on stone buildings and monuments and painted on pottery.

Maya scribes also wrote books called codices.

