

History: Who were the Maya? -Y5 T5 & 6

Learning link

This unit builds on our previous study of Ancient Civilisations (Ancient Egypt and the Romans) and prepares us for studying how early societies developed complex systems of government and belief.

Facts

- Mathematics:** The Maya were pioneers in maths, being one of the first civilizations to develop the concept of **zero**.
- Astronomy:** By tracking the stars, they created a solar calendar more accurate than those in Europe at the time.
- Architecture:** They built massive limestone pyramids, such as **Chichen Itza**, without using metal tools or the wheel.

People

- The Ajaw (King):** The supreme ruler of a city-state, believed to be a living god who could communicate with the heavens.
- Priests & Nobles:** The elite class who were the only ones able to read, write, and perform religious rituals.
- Scribes:** Highly respected individuals who recorded history and astronomical data in bark-paper books called codices.
- Farmers:** The largest group in society who provided food (maize) and labour for building the great stone temples.

Vocabulary

Mesoamerica	The historical region including Central America and Southern Mexico where the Maya lived.
City-State	An independent city that has its own government and ruler, like Tikal or Palenque.
Hieroglyphics	A complex writing system using symbols (glyphs) to represent sounds or words.
Polytheism	The religious belief in and worship of many different gods and goddesses.

Timeline

