

| Who Were the Ancient Mayans? - Summer 1 2022 History Knowledge Organiser |

WHO ARE THE MAYANS?

The Maya are native Americans of **Mesoamerica**, who built a great **civilisation** in the tropical rainforest that lasted for over 2000 years. The earliest **settlements** were built in around 2000 BC to the peak of Maya civilisation between 250 - 900 AD. Suddenly, in 900 AD, many significant Maya settlements were **abandoned**, however some cities like Chichén Itzá still thrived. At its peak, the Mayan **civilisation** had 40 cities and almost 2 million people. All Maya shared a similar culture and religion, but each city governed itself and had its own ruler. The cities never came together to form a single empire. Mayan Kings were constantly at war with one another, fighting for **tribute** and prisoners to **sacrifice** to the gods.



DID YOU KNOW? THE MAYANS WERE EXPERT MATHEMATICIANS AND **ASTRONOMERS** AND USED THEIR EXPERTISE TO MAKE CALENDARS. THIS INFORMED THEM OF WHEN TO PLANT AND HARVEST THEIR CROPS AND MAKE SACRIFICES TO THE GODS.

THE MAYA WERE THE ONLY MAJOR AMERICAN CIVILISATION TO DEVELOP A WRITING SYSTEM TO REPRESENT THEIR SPOKEN LANGUAGE. IT HAD 500 SYMBOLS OR GLYPHS TO REPRESENT WORDS/IDEAS.



Chichén Itzá is a city built by the Maya located in Mexico and its remains (like ball court and Temple of the Serpent) tell us about what Mayan civilisation may have been like. Stone **artefacts**, writing and remains of cities like Chichén Itzá in Mexico show us what Mayan **civilisation** was like.

Key Words

abandoned	Left for a long time.	hieroglyphs	Symbols or pictures used to represent words.
artefact	An object that is made from a person such as a tool, pot or decoration.	Mesoamerica	A historical region and cultural area now known as modern day Mexico and Central America.
astronomer	Someone who studies the planets and stars.	sacrifice	To kill an animal or person in a religious ceremony.
civilisation	An organised society with its own culture and way of life, existing in a particular area and period of time.	settlements	A place where people establish a community.
drought	A long period of abnormally low rainfall, leading to a shortage of water.	tribute	An act, statement or gift that is intended to show gratitude, respect or admiration