

900 AD

Key Vocabulary

astronomy	The Mayans were able to predict solar eclipses and used observatories and shadow-casting devices.
calendar	These were circular and charted the movements of the sun, moon, stars and planets, with 365 days in a year.
hieroglyphs	They used about 800 symbols to create writing, often on folded pages forming a book (codex).
Kings/Queens	The King/Queen was thought to be given the right to rule by the gods. Each city had a palace for them.
maize	The staple food of the Mayans which was so important that they even had a maize god.
numbers	Using a base 20 system (we use base 10), they used dots and bars to create numbers and had a symbol for zero.
pok-a-tok	A game where large rubber balls were aimed at stone hoops. Losers were sometimes sacrificed to the gods!
pyramids	Built with a temple at the top to give sacrifices to the gods, others were built for the gods themselves.
sacrifice	Humans and animals were used as a blood offering to gods, mostly war prisoners by decapitation or heart removal.
stelae	Stone monuments glorifying Kings and record his deeds, although early examples were of mythical scenes.

Key Questions

- What other ancient civilisations existed at the same time as the Mayans?
- Can you name 3 major achievements of the Mayan civilisation?
- How was Mayan religion and beliefs different to those of Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain?
- How was Mayan life and society different to those of Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain?
- Can you name some of the reasons for mass abandonment of Mayan cities?

Famous Figures

Mayan Gods

Some were in human form, others in animal but the most supreme god was Itzamna, the creator god, lord of day and night and ruler of the heavens. Many looked after the weather or crops such as Chac, the rain god and Kinich-Ahau the sun god. Priests would perform ceremonies (including sacrifices) to please them and Kings were thought to turn into gods after they died. They believed the world was divided into three parts (Heaven, Earth and the Underworld), linked together by a giant world tree.