

History Knowledge Organiser

Year 5

Autumn (ii)

What are the achievements of the Maya?

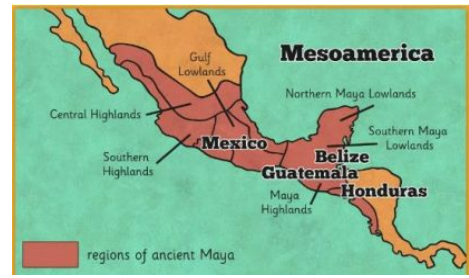
Substantive Knowledge - What we need to know about Mayan achievements

The Achievements of the Maya - the science of astronomy, calendar systems and hieroglyphic writing.

The ancient Maya were avid astronomers, recording and interpreting every aspect of the sky. They believed that the will and actions of the gods could be read in the stars, moon, and planets. Many of their most important buildings were built with astronomy in mind - The Sun, Moon, and planets—Venus, in particular—were studied by the Maya.

The heyday of Maya astronomy was in the 8th century C.E., and Maya published astronomical tables tracking the movements of celestial bodies on the walls of a special structure at Xultun, Guatemala in the early 9th century. The tables are also found in the Dresden Codex - a bark-paper book written in the 15th century C.E. The Maya calendar was largely based on the ancient Mesoamerican calendar created at least as early as 1500 B.C.E., and corrected and maintained by specialist astronomical observers.

The Maya believed that the Earth was the centre of all things, fixed and immovable. The stars, moons, sun, and planets were gods; their movements were interpreted as gods traveling between the Earth, the underworld, and other celestial destinations.



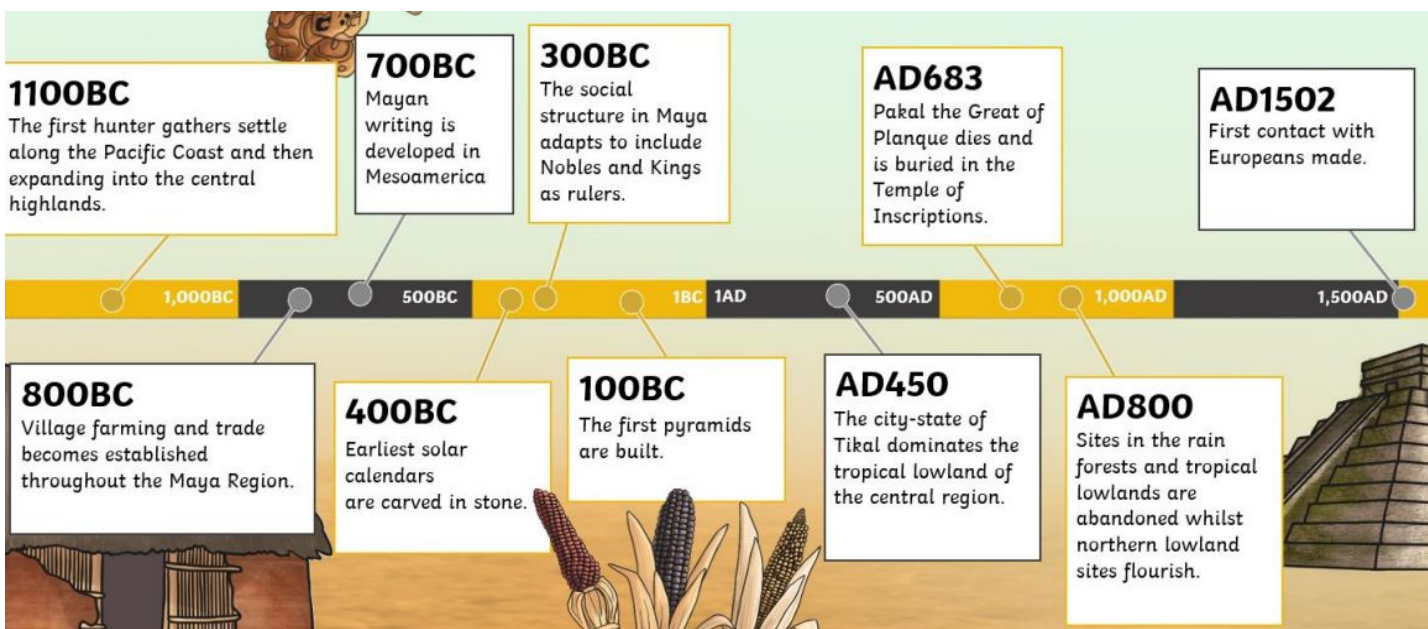
The Maya Calendar

The Maya had two kinds of calendars, a religious calendar called the Tzolk'in and a solar calendar called the Haab'. Every 52 years the two calendars would start on the same day. The Maya would celebrate the New Fire Festival on this day (El Fuego Nuevo). All the fires throughout their households would be put out and they would throw away all their clay utensils. It was a time of renewal and new beginnings.

The solar calendar, or Haab', had 18 months of 20 days each. There were five extra "unlucky" days in the 19th month to get to total of 365 days in a year.

Xultun

Guatemala



The Maya built elaborate cities using stone.



Mayan architecture spanned over a thousand years. Many cities contain similar features such as stepped pyramids, temples, palaces and carved stone monuments, but not all of them contain every one. Each city is different, as the Mayans followed a more spontaneous approach to urban design.

The Mayans tended to build around a central plaza where they located the most important buildings, those involved with public ceremonies. Around the central plaza are the pyramids, some with a wooden temple built on top, the palaces, ball courts, temples and elite dwellings. Stone walkways linked residential areas with the city centre.

Farther out, more plazas were built, around which were the homes of common people. All, however, could reach the centre for the great religious ceremonies. The heart of every Mayan city was the central plaza.



Mayan chocolate using authentic recipes

Place the cacao nibs in the pestle and mortar and start to grind.

As the powder is formed add a little water to help create the paste easier.

After a good while grinding the cacao nibs you will have a smooth paste. Add this to one of the jugs.

Pour the honey and vanilla extract into the paste and then add in just under 1/2 pint of hot water. Now stir to combine.

It's time to make the mixture frothy; pass the mixture from one jug to another noting the bubbles and froth that forms.

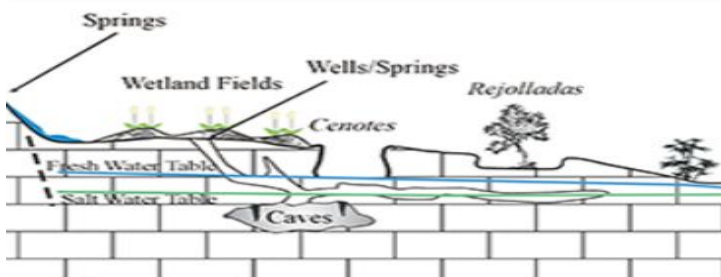
The Decline of the Maya Civilisation

The Maya still exist today. However, their number have declined for a number of reasons: overpopulation, drought, war and shifting trade routes meant that cities were abandoned.



Complex reservoir creations, water filtration and purification systems.

Unlike early civilisations in Britain, Mayan cities were not all by rivers, The Maya developed complex reservoir systems to support life away from rivers.



Maya Hieroglyphs

The Mayan system of writing contains more than 800 characters, including some that are hieroglyphic and other phonetic signs representing syllables. The hieroglyphic signs are pictorial—i.e., they are recognizable pictures of real objects—representing animals, people, and objects of daily life.



Portable Knowledge – What we need to remember

Maya achievements include the science of astronomy, calendar systems and hieroglyphic writing.

They built elaborate cities using stone.

They had complex reservoir creations, water filtration and purification systems.

They used cocoa to make chocolate.

Core Vocabulary

Decline – To become less

Authentic– original

Continuity – uninterrupted and continuous