



Curriculum

Year 6 Scheme of Work

Term: Summer Term 2

Topic: History- Mayans

Key Skills and Knowledge:

Substantive Knowledge – children’s knowledge about the past. civilisation, trade, settlement, empire, monarchy

Disciplinary Knowledge – children’s knowledge of how historians think.

Chronological Understanding

To place the Ancient Maya on a timeline- Archaic period (before 2000BCE, Preclassic period (200BCE to 250CE) and the Classic period 250 CE to 900CE).

To have an understanding of the chronology of events from 11,000 BCE up until the mysterious collapse of the Southern Maya city-states in the 9th century CE.

To know some features of Ancient Maya life, clothes, houses, farming, tools/weapons (sense of period)

To compare a timeline of Britain with a timeline of Ancient Maya to see what was happening during these periods of time.

How did early Maya begin and what was it like there?

Where was Ancient Maya?

What can excavations tell us about early Maya?

What was life like in early Maya?

To know where and when did the Maya live? (Modern-day Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.)

To know what made the Maya civilisation so successful?

To know that the Maya had access to materials for building (limestone and chert) and making tools (obsidian).

To know that the Maya were good at solving problems:

To know that the Maya invented a cistern for collecting and storing water.

To know that the Maya created the 'Terrace Farming' technique.

To know about the Maya hierarchy.

To know that the Maya were not a united empire of people with a capital city like Ancient Egypt. Instead, each city was its own state with a ruler and council of high priests.

These city-states of the Maya often went to war against each other to prove they were the strongest in the region.

To know that in the early Pre-Classic Maya era, the rule was predominantly through a village chief, but adopted a hierarchical governmental system with rule by a monarch and the aristocracy.

To know about the ruler of Tikal, Jasaw Chan K’awil, and the temples he built.

To know that women were important and influential in Maya society. They were valued like men.

Archaeologists have discovered evidence showing powerful women in the 7th and 8th centuries. E.g. evidence of Maya queens inscribed onto a stone (stela).

These women included Lady Wak Chanil Ajaw, Ik’Skull, Lady Yohl Ik’nal and Muwaan Mat of Palenque. This suggests a shift in the importance of hereditary in Maya society. During the classic period, several high-ranking women in society rose to the position of ruling

Historical Enquiry (How do we know?)

Reason about the reliability of sources presented to them. True or false? Probably true/probably false? Definitely true/definitely false? Don’t know?

Evidence and Interpretation

Archaeological studies differ on the reasons why some city-states in the Southern Maya lowlands transformed from busy city states to abandoned ruins in just over 100 years!

These studies are not supported with real evidence.

Archaeologists use wall art, artefacts (such as funeral masks, pottery, farming equipment, and jewellery) and beautiful writing to understand how the Maya used to live.

To know that in 1968, archaeologists the funeral mask of King Pakal, who ruled Palenque for 68 years during the classic period. To know that in 2023, in the Archaeological Zone of Chichén Itzá, archaeologists from the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) discovered a circular shaped stone marker they believed to be a scoreboard for Pelota, a ball game played by the Maya hundreds of years ago.

Change and continuity

How similar was life in Ancient Maya to today?

The Maya developed their own mathematics, using a base number of 20 and had a concept of zero. They also had their own system of writing. The Maya were expert astronomers. They used this expertise to make calendars.

Cause and Consequence

Before 900 CE, most trading routes travelled along rivers such as the Usumacinta, allowing city-states like Calakmul, Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras to benefit by controlling the trade.

With the abandonment of the southern lowland city-states, those inland river-based routes became less profitable, and as a result, the traders increased their use of the sea-based routes.

Similarities and Differences

To know how similar and different the civilisations of the Maya City States to the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms?

To compare this with earlier ancient civilizations such as Rome, Egypt to show an understanding characteristic feature of past societies.

Clothing, housing etc due to weather and the availability of natural resources.

Significance

The Temple of Kukulcan in Chichen Itza is one of the 7 Wonders of the World. Chichen Itza’s structures, like the temples and pyramids, were sacred to the ancient Maya people. They still stand today. The descent of the serpent in the Chichen Itza

queen.

What can artefacts tell us about Ancient Maya?

Artefacts show historians and archaeologists that life was very different for the rich and poor in Maya society.

To know that important Maya (those at the top of the hierarchy) wore funeral masks when they died, others had jadeite jewellery. Large amounts of jadeite in the burial showed their status in the afterlife as equal to the god of Maize

To know that they believed in gods and an afterlife.

To know that the Maya were good at making jewellery from jadeite stone.

To know that the Maya Wall art and writing give us an idea of what life was like for the different people in Maya society.

To know about the rise and the fall of many city-states.

To know that the first cities of Kaminaljuyu, Tak'alik Abaj, Nakbe, and El Mirador grew and had the largest populations.

To know that these places gained control of important resources and were on trade routes with the peoples beyond the Maya area to the north and south.

To know that Maya cities had a dramatic stepped pyramid topped by a temple. Close by were the palaces of the royal court. As well as temples and plazas, there were grand ball courts.

To know how the abandonment of the Southern Maya lowlands helped the Northern city-states like Chiche Itza to thrive in the 10th century?

To know that there are many competing explanations why the southern Maya civilisations ended (e.g. drought, over-population, warfare, poor land, popular discontent, disease) and that it is difficult to be certain as to the reason, without written records.

To know how this led to the city-state of Chichen Itza to become the dominant city.

To know how this led to trading routes changing from river routes to sea-based routes.

To know how the development of trade ports supported the rise of Chichen Itza.

To know about the Temple of Kukulcan in Chichen Itza and why it was important for the Maya.

Equinox can be seen on March 21 and September 21st each year at 3pm, the sun's rays create a pattern of shadows that form the image of a serpent on the north face of the pyramid. Over the course of an hour the serpent's body stretches to meet its stone head at the bottom of the stairs.

Discoveries are still being unearthed in the area, providing even more insight into the culture and accomplishments of the Maya.

Maya religion and beliefs

The main god of the Maya, Itzamna was the god of fire who created the Earth.

Mayan religion was extremely bloodthirsty, demanding human sacrifices and blood-letting rituals.

The Mayans believed in an afterlife and that those who were sacrificed, as well as those killed in war and women who died in childbirth, went to 'the place of misty sky'.

At the top of Mayan society was the king and royal family who were believed to be closely linked to the gods. They occupied the finest buildings in the city.

Kukulcan The serpent god of the Maya. One of the primary gods, especially to the Itza peoples of Chichen Itza.

Knowledge – tell the story

What was it like for people living in the Ancient Maya period?

To tell the story about the how they built huge temples, created beautiful paintings, crafted impressive tools, made balls by gathering latex from rubber trees, something Europeans had never seen. They invented the water cistern systems, temple farming and built a vast trade network through the largest cities. To discuss what they think life would have been like for rich and poor Maya people.

What did they wear?

What did they eat?

What tools did they use? Although the Maya had metal-working skills, metal ores were scarce. Mayans used stone tools to carve the limestone that they used for their buildings.

What did their houses look like?

To begin to make connections, contrasts and trends over time with other historical civilisations.

Reading and Writing Opportunities (Long and Short Activities)

Creative Ideas and Hooks

Mayan diary extract

Now, Press Play Experience: role play different Maya societies such as the city kingdom of Tikal versus rural, agricultural life

Scientific and mathematical knowledge: astronomy, pyramid-building, calendar and number system, Maya religion and culture, including the ball game, sacrifice and the role of the gods/ Why the Maya civilisation may have declined/

Hot seating - teacher plays a Mayan Noble

News Report for TV recorded using green screen- 1 thing famous about the Mayans. What impact does it have on our lives today?

Map work

Create a 'mind map' of Maya society, taking into account the hierarchy diagram, highlighting the better-off and the worse-off members.

Links to PSHCE, Equality and British Values Work

Roles of men and women during Mayan times

Looking at different cultures

Differences / similarities Slavery

Key Vocabulary:

Stela, Slaves, Mayans, Nobles, Chichen Itza, Cacao seeds, Empire, Civilisation, Ruins

Resources Available / Visits/Visitors

Books
Internet

Useful Websites:

<https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/ancientcultures/maya/civilization/>
<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/topics/zq6svcw>

	Mayan educational talk at Cadbury's World	https://www.keystagehistory.co.uk/keystage-2/outstanding-lessons-keystage-2/maya-keystage-2/ https://maya.nmai.si.edu/the-maya/maya-world
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