

# Exploring the Maya Civilisation with Ellie the Elephant

*Learning objective: To identify and understand key features, geography, and cultural achievements of the ancient Maya civilisation.*

Read each flashcard carefully. Ellie the Elephant has remembered these fascinating facts about the Maya to help you study. Test your knowledge by covering the answer side!

**Where in the world did the Maya civilisation develop?**

Mesoamerica, which includes modern-day Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

**What is a 'city-state' in the context of the Maya?**

An independent city that had its own ruler and government, rather than one single empire ruled by one person.

**Which important crop was the foundation of the Maya diet?**

Maize (sweetcorn), which they believed was so precious that humans were made from it according to their creation stories.

**What type of writing system did the Maya use?**

Hieroglyphs, which are complex symbols representing sounds and words, often carved into stone stelae.

**What was the purpose of the tall, stone pyramids found in Maya cities?**

They were built as temples to honour their gods and often served as royal burial places.

**Why was the rainforest environment significant to the Maya?**

It provided essential resources like wood for building, plants for medicine, and animals for food, but also required clever farming techniques.

**What is significant about the Maya understanding of the stars?**

They were expert astronomers who observed the sky to track the movements of planets and stars to create precise calendars.

**What prized ingredient did the Maya use to make a bitter, frothy drink?**

Cacao beans, which were so valuable they were sometimes used as a form of currency.

**How did the Maya measure time?**

They used a complex system of calendars, including a 260-day sacred calendar and a 365-day solar calendar.

**What is Chichen Itza?**

A large, famous Maya city containing the iconic El Castillo pyramid, which shows their advanced architectural skills.

**Why do historians rely on archaeologists to learn about the Maya?**

Because many Maya books were destroyed, so archaeologists must study ruins, tools, and carvings to piece together their history.

**What are 'stelae' in Maya history?**

Tall stone pillars carved with images and hieroglyphs that recorded the lives and achievements of powerful kings and queens.