

Exploring the Maya Civilisation with Ellie

Learning objective: To understand the key features of the ancient Maya civilisation, including their achievements in writing, agriculture, and city-building.

Use your knowledge of the ancient Maya to answer the questions below. Think carefully about how Ellie the elephant remembers the fascinating facts about this society!

Ellie the elephant has been studying the ancient Maya, who lived in the tropical lowlands of Mesoamerica. They built magnificent stone cities, observed the stars with great precision, and created a complex writing system. Their society relied heavily on farming, with maize being their most important crop. They are famous for their towering stone structures that reached towards the sky.

Word bank: Hieroglyphs · Rainforest · Maize · Chichen Itza · Astronomy · Step-pyramids

1. The Maya built large structures in their city centres that were used for religious ceremonies. What are these stone structures usually called? (1 mark)

2. Explain why 'maize' was so important to the daily lives of the Maya people. (2 marks)

3. The Maya did not use an alphabet like ours. What is the name of the system they used to record information using pictures and symbols? (1 mark)

4. Name one famous Maya city and describe one feature that made Maya cities unique. (2 marks)

5. The Maya were experts at observing the sun, moon, and planets. What scientific subject does this relate to? (1 mark)

Draw: Draw a scene of a Maya city hidden in the rainforest. Include a tall step-pyramid, some lush trees, and a market stall selling maize.



Extension challenge: If you were a Maya leader, would you build your city near a river or deep in the jungle? Write two sentences explaining your choice based on the resources you would need to survive.