

The Maya Civilisation: People of the Rainforest

Learning objective: To understand the key features of the Maya civilisation, including their location, achievements, and daily life.

Read the passage carefully, then answer the questions below using full sentences.

Ellie the elephant loves uncovering the secrets of the past. Long ago, between 250 AD and 900 AD, a fascinating civilisation thrived in the dense rainforests of Central America: the Maya. Unlike a single country, the Maya lived in many independent city-states, each ruled by its own king. They were brilliant mathematicians and astronomers, creating a complex calendar to track the stars. The Maya built towering stone pyramids and temples that rose high above the jungle canopy. Their writing system was unique, using intricate symbols called hieroglyphics to record their history. They grew crops like maize, beans, and squash in special forest gardens. Maya people were also skilled at creating colorful pottery and beautiful jewellery made from jade. Although their cities were eventually abandoned, the Maya people did not disappear. Today, millions of their descendants still live in the region, keeping their ancient traditions, languages, and vibrant culture alive. Archaeologists continue to explore the jungle today, using modern technology to find more hidden ruins buried beneath the thick vines and tall trees.

Word bank: civilisation · archaeologist · temple · hieroglyphics · astronomy · rainforest

1. Identify two types of crops that the Maya grew in their forest gardens. (2 marks)

2. What was the name of the symbols the Maya used for their writing system? (1 mark)

3. Why do you think the Maya built their temples so tall that they rose above the jungle canopy? (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, how do we know that the Maya civilisation did not completely disappear? (2 marks)

5. Do you think the Maya were a highly advanced society for their time? Explain your answer using evidence from the text. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene of a Maya city hidden in the rainforest, including a tall stone pyramid temple and lush green trees.



Extension challenge: Research one Maya invention, such as their number system or their calendar, and write three interesting facts about how it worked.