

Exploring the Maya Civilisation

Learning objective: To identify key features of the Maya civilisation, including their achievements in writing, astronomy, and architecture.

Read each question carefully and use your knowledge of the Maya people to provide detailed answers. Ellie the Elephant is here to help you remember the historical facts!

The Maya civilisation thrived in the tropical lowlands of Mesoamerica for hundreds of years. Known for their complex writing system, advanced mathematical understanding, and monumental stone architecture, the Maya built powerful city-states in the heart of the rainforest. They were expert farmers who relied on the harvest of maize and skilled observers of the night sky.

Word bank: Chichén Itzá · Hieroglyphics · Astronomy · Maize · Step-pyramid · Calendar · City-state

1. The Maya built magnificent stone structures in their cities. Describe the purpose and appearance of a Maya step-pyramid. (2 marks)

2. Why was the discovery of the 'zero' and advanced mathematics important for the Maya way of life? (2 marks)

3. The Maya were brilliant astronomers. Explain how their study of the stars influenced their daily lives and agricultural practices. (3 marks)

4. Identify one reason why the Maya lived in independent city-states rather than one single, unified country. (2 marks)

5. Maize was a vital crop for the Maya. Why do you think a stable food supply was necessary for their civilisation to grow and build such impressive cities? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene from a Maya city-state. Include a tall step-pyramid, a marketplace where farmers are trading maize, and a clear sky showing the constellations the Maya might have studied.



Extension challenge: Research one Maya invention or discovery that is still used or understood in a different form today. Write a short paragraph explaining how it has changed over time.