

Maya Civilisation: Architects of the Rainforest

Learning objective: To analyse the societal structure, scientific achievements, and daily life of the ancient Maya civilisation.

Ellie the Elephant has been studying the incredible history of the Maya people. Use the information you know about Maya society to complete the 'True or False' challenge. For every statement you mark as 'False', you must provide a brief justification explaining the correct historical fact to demonstrate your understanding.

Word bank: Chichen Itza · Hieroglyphs · Maize · Astronomy · City-states · Obsidian

1. The Maya lived in one single, unified empire ruled by one powerful king who lived in a central capital city. (2 marks)

2. The Maya developed a complex writing system using symbols known as hieroglyphs to record history and religious events. (2 marks)

3. Maize (corn) was an insignificant crop that played no role in the Maya diet or religious beliefs. (2 marks)

4. Maya scientists and priests were highly skilled in astronomy, allowing them to create accurate calendars based on the movement of the stars. (2 marks)

5. The Maya civilisation reached its height during the Victorian era, around 1850 AD. (2 marks)

6. Explain why the geographical location of the Maya civilisation (the rainforests of Central America) would have influenced the materials they used for building and tools. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a labelled diagram of a Maya step-pyramid, showing the temple at the top and the surrounding rainforest environment.



Extension challenge: Justify your answer: If you were an archaeologist discovering a new Maya site, which discovery would tell you more about their daily lives: a collection of gold jewellery or a set of discarded clay pottery and farming tools? Explain your reasoning in a short paragraph.