

Exploring the Maya Civilisation: Flashcard Challenge

Learning objective: To consolidate knowledge of the Maya civilisation, including their social structure, technological achievements, and daily life, whilst developing higher-order thinking skills.

Use these flashcards to test your knowledge of the ancient Maya. Read the question on the front, formulate your answer, then check the back. For the 'Greater Depth' questions, try to explain your reasoning in detail.

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

An independent city that has its own government and rules, often controlling the surrounding territory.

Why was the crop 'maize' so vital to the Maya people?

It was their primary food source and was so important that it held deep religious significance in their creation stories.

Explain why the Maya were considered advanced in the field of mathematics.

They developed a sophisticated number system based on 20 and were one of the first civilisations to use the concept of zero.

What was the primary purpose of the large, stepped pyramids built by the Maya?

They served as temples for religious ceremonies and sometimes as burial places for powerful rulers.

Describe the role of a 'scribe' in Maya society.

Scribes were highly respected individuals who recorded history, religious texts, and astronomical observations using complex hieroglyphics.

What was the significance of astronomy to the Maya?

They tracked the movements of the sun, moon, and planets to create accurate calendars, which helped them plan agricultural cycles and religious festivals.

Compare and contrast the Maya social hierarchy to a modern-day society.

The Maya had a rigid hierarchy with kings at the top and enslaved people at the bottom, unlike modern societies which generally promote more social mobility and democratic equality.

Justify why the Maya civilisation is often described as 'highly developed'.

Due to their complex writing system, advanced architectural feats, precise calendar systems, and intricate trade networks across Central America.

What might happen if the Maya had not developed their advanced agricultural techniques?

They would likely have been unable to support large city populations, which would have prevented the growth of their complex civilisation.

Explain how the geography of the Maya region influenced where they built their cities.

They often chose locations near reliable water sources (cenotes) and in areas suitable for farming, though they also had to adapt to dense rainforest environments.