

Uncovering the Maya: A Historical Investigation with Ellie the Elephant

Learning objective: To analyse the achievements and societal structure of the Maya civilisation, using historical evidence to construct a reasoned argument.

Use the prompts below to structure your historical report. Ensure you use specific evidence to support your claims and maintain an objective, academic tone. Ellie the Elephant reminds you to check your facts and use your memory to recall key historical details.

The Maya civilisation, which thrived in the tropical lowlands of Mesoamerica, remains one of the most intellectually advanced societies of the ancient world.

Word bank: furthermore · consequently · in contrast · archaeological evidence · civilisation · chronological · significant · sophisticated · perspective · as a result

1. Geographical Context: Describe the environment where the Maya lived and explain why this location was significant for their agricultural success... (2 marks)

2. Societal Structure: Compare the roles of the ruling class to those of the common people. Justify why this hierarchy might have been necessary for maintaining order... (3 marks)

3. Scientific Achievement: Choose one major Maya achievement (e.g., mathematics, astronomy, or architecture). Explain why this development was revolutionary for the time... (3 marks)

4. The Mystery of Decline: What might have happened if the Maya had not faced environmental or political challenges? Formulate a theory based on your research... (4 marks)

5. Evidence Analysis: Evaluate the importance of archaeological findings, such as stone stelae or temples, in our modern understanding of Maya history... (3 marks)

6. Reflection: How does the Maya civilisation compare and contrast with other ancient societies you have studied in Year 5? (3 marks)

Extension challenge: Imagine you are an archaeologist who has just discovered a new Maya site. Write a formal field report describing one item you found and why it is a significant historical artefact. Include a detailed explanation of what this item tells us about the daily life or beliefs of the Maya people.