Ellie’s Maya Civilisation Discovery Trail

Learning objective: To understand the social structure, achievements, and daily life of the ancient Maya civilisation.

Ellie the elephant has been exploring the history of the ancient Maya. Help her sort the following historical facts into the correct category: 'Social Hierarchy', 'Achievements & Inventions', or 'Daily Life'. Write the letter of each fact into the correct column in your table.

Word bank: Hieroglyphics · Maize · Social Hierarchy · Astronomy · Temple-pyramids · Nobles · Cocoa beans · City-states

1. A) The Maya developed a complex system of writing using symbols known as hieroglyphics. Which category does this belong to? (1 mark)

2. B) Society was organised with Kings and Nobles at the top, and farmers or labourers at the base. Which category is this? (1 mark)

3. C) The Maya were expert mathematicians and astronomers, accurately tracking the movements of planets. Which category is this? (1 mark)

4. D) The diet of the Maya was largely based on a staple crop called maize, which was often ground into flour. Which category is this? (1 mark)

5. E) Many Maya people lived in independent city-states, each ruled by a powerful king. Explain why this made the Maya civilisation different from a single unified empire. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a sketch of a Maya temple-pyramid, ensuring you include the steep stone steps and a flat top where ceremonies once took place.

Extension challenge: Research how the Maya used cocoa beans as currency. If a simple clay pot cost 10 beans and a woven cloth cost 25 beans, how many beans would a merchant need to trade for three pots and two cloths?