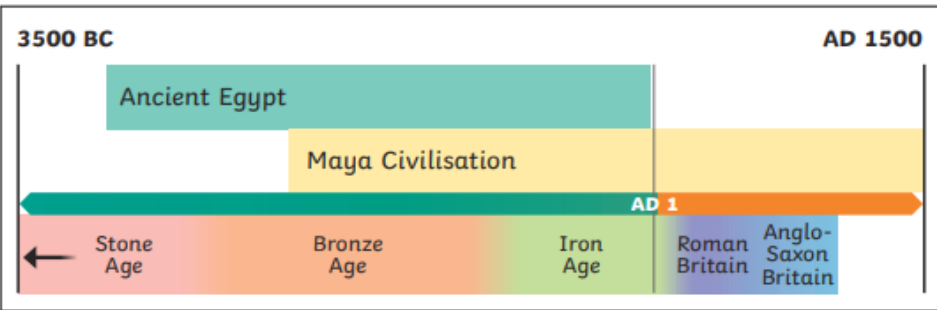


St Andrew's Primary School - Knowledge Organiser 2024-2025

Topic: The Ancient Maya

Year 6

Term 4



Facts for Life

- 1) The ancient Maya thrived in city states across an area of Central America covered by modern day Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.
- 2) Religion, sport, cacao and maize were all significant in Maya society. They used glyphs to record and made early use of the idea of 0 in maths (around 3CE.)
- 3) The ancient Maya cities were abandoned and there are several theories with evidence to explain this occurrence.

Key Dates (c. stands for circa, which means approximately)	
c. 2000 BC	The Maya civilisation comes into being in Central America.
c. 300 BC	Cities, such as El Mirador, become large and powerful.
AD 900	Cities in the rainforest are abandoned due to a drought . People move north to the highlands of Guatemala and the Yucatán.
AD 1000	Cities like Chichén Itzá (which has two temple pyramids) are still thriving.
AD 1500s (16 th century)	The Spanish arrive in South America and set out to destroy the remaining elements of Maya civilisation as part of their conquest.
AD 1839	American explorer and writer, John Lloyd Stephens, and British artist, Frederick Catherwood, explore Copán and other cities including Chichén Itzá, reigniting interest in the Maya civilisation .
AD 2014	The cities of Lagunita and Tamchén are rediscovered.

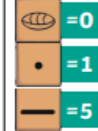
Key Vocabulary	
civilisation	A human society with well-developed rules and government, often where technology and the arts are considered important.
drought	A long period of time with little or no rain.
jaguar	A big cat, heavier than a leopard, with yellowish fur and black spots.
scribes	People trained to write things down, either as an official record or for someone else unable to write.
codices	Ancient handwritten texts. Maya codices could be unfolded like a concertina. One text is called a codex.
maize	Another word for sweetcorn or corn on the cob. It can be made into a dough and baked into tortillas.
cacao beans	Cacao trees sprout pods directly from their trunks. When they are ripe, the pods can be broken open to reveal the beans, which can then be dried, roasted and ground.

Maya Numbers

The Maya developed an advanced number system for their time.

They were one of only two cultures in the world to develop the concept of zero as a placeholder.

The number system used three symbols in different combinations.



The Maya built cities, pyramids and ornate sculptures in the rainforest.

Writing

The Maya writing system was used to write several different Maya languages. It was made up of many symbols called glyphs.

Logograms are glyphs representing whole words.

Syllabograms are glyphs representing units of sound (syllables).

The glyphs were carved on stone buildings and monuments and painted on pottery.

Maya **scribes** also wrote books called **codices**.



Food

The Maya people mainly ate **maize** (corn). **Maize** was very important to them as they believed that the first humans were made from **maize** dough by the gods.

The Maya made a bitter chocolatey drink from **cacao beans** that was enjoyed by the rich. It was used for medicines and in ceremonies. The **cacao beans** were highly valued and even used as a form of money.

