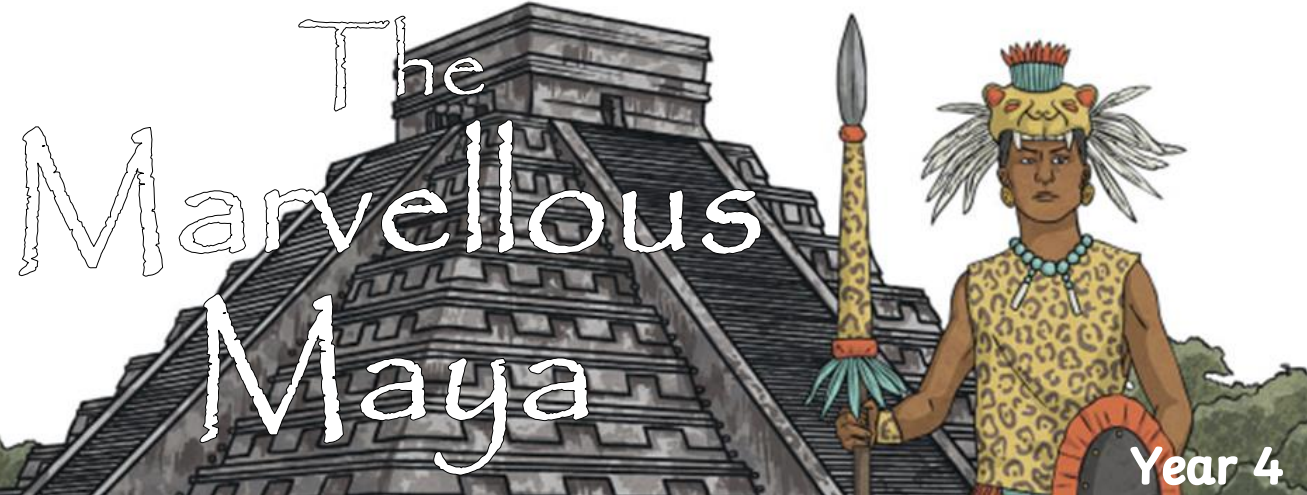


# The Marvellous Maya



Year 4

## 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.

## Religion

The Maya believed in many gods and goddesses. They thought that the gods/goddesses had a good side and a bad side that they could help or hurt them. The Maya people would dance, sing and make offerings to the gods/goddesses.

Maya priests were believed to be able to communicate directly with the gods/goddesses. As a result, they were very important in society.



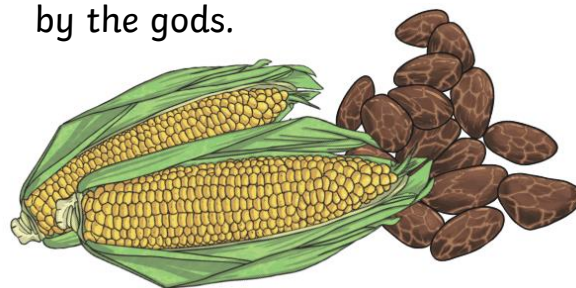
## Key Dates

(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 <sup>th</sup> 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, Fredrick 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.

## 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.



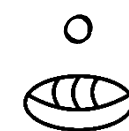
The Maya made a bitter chocolatey drink from cacao beans that was enjoyed by the rich. It was used for medicines and in ceremonies. The cacao beans were highly valued and even used as a form of money.

## Writing and Numbers

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



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.



America is split into North America and South America. The Maya lived in Central America.



'Mesoamerica' refers to an area where a number of societies had been formed before the Spanish arrived in the 16th century. It covers Mexico and the northern parts of Central America. 'Mesoamerica' can also refer to the culture of the people who lived there. The Maya lived in the south east of this area.



Today, the area the Maya used to live in spreads over 5 countries: Mexico (southern Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula), Belize, Guatemala, a small area of west Honduras and the very north of El Salvador.

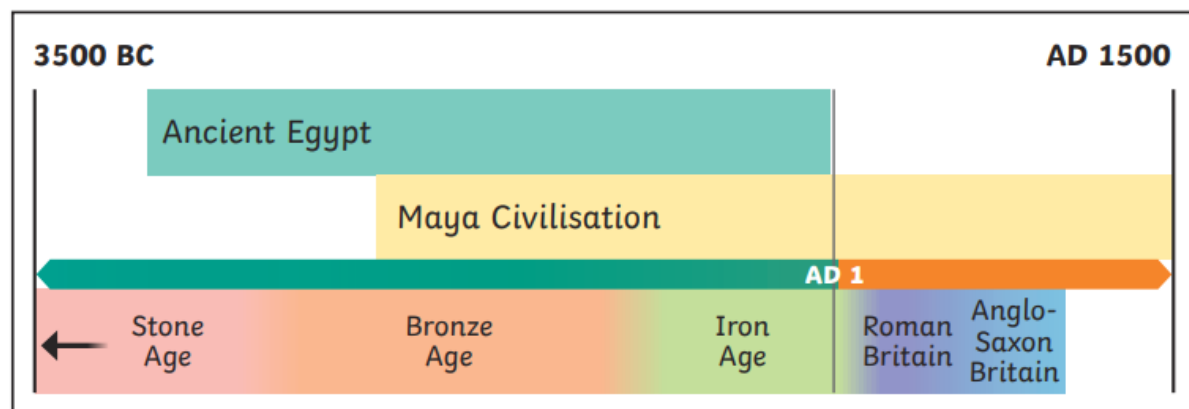
### Where was the Maya Civilisation based?

The Maya lived in an area known as Mesoamerica.

The Maya people first lived in villages but around AD 200, they began living in larger cities. Some of the most well-known cities include Chichén Itzá, Palenque and Tikal. Tikal may have had a population as high as 90,000.

### What were the Maya cities like?

- The Maya built many cities in the middle of rainforests.
- Each city had its own king or queens to rule it. The ruler would have lived in a large palace.
- The Maya would also have ball courts where they would play pok-a-tok (or pok-ta-pok). This game was not just played for fun but also to please the gods or settle conflicts.
- Cities had marketplaces where the Maya would trade goods.
- The Maya also built large pyramids, which were topped with a small platform or shelter. These pyramids were used as landmarks as well as burial sites for important people but were mostly used for religious reasons.



Ancient Maya mask

