



## Knowledge Organiser for Year 6 History Topic: The Ancient Maya

Important dates	
2500 BC– 910 AD	Dates of the start and end of the Ancient Maya civilisation.
250 AD – 910 AD	Classical Mayan period.
1605 AD	Arrival of conquistadors (Spanish invaders) in Mesoamerica.
Tier 3 vocabulary	
Mesoamerica	The Maya lived in Mesoamerica which is made up by the following countries- Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Belize, El Salvador, 9 states in Mexico.
Civilisation	The stage of human social development and organization which is considered most advanced. The society, culture, and way of life of a particular area.
Culture	The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.
Mayan/Maya	The Maya = refers to the people. Mayan = adjective to refer to aspects of their culture (Mayan temple/ Mayan language).
Slash and burn	Cutting down and burning trees (milpa)
Terracing	Cutting shelves/ platforms into hillsides to create flat areas for planting.
Crop rotation	Planting a variety of crops in turn to help give the soil a range of nutrients.
Aqueduct	Man-made channels to move water from one place to another.
Pok-ta-pok	Mesoamerican ball game. It had ritual and religious associations and the losers (or possibly the winners) are believed to have been sacrificed. The ball could only be hit with hips, elbows and knees.
Important facts	
Trade	Mayan cities traded with each other sometimes using cacao beans as money.
Religion	The Mayan religion was polytheistic (they believed in more than one god). Each god was associated with different areas of life. For example there was a god of rain and a god of corn. The Maya believed that after you died you went to the underworld (similar to the beliefs of the Greeks and Egyptians). Mayan rulers and priests were believed to be in contact with the gods.
Sacrifice/ blood-letting	The Maya did practise human sacrifice as well as animal sacrifice in honour of the gods. The Maya also gave human and animal blood offerings to the gods.
War	City-states had different rulers and there were wars between them. These wars were often fought just to take captives and not to take over land. Some cities had to pay tributes (taxes) to other cities. Weapons included chilli powder, beehives, knives, spears and swords.
Food	Key foods included maize and cacao.
Beauty	The Mayan idea of beauty included a flattened forehead, cross eyes, tattoos, teeth filing and large noses.
Buildings	Pyramids – Religious ceremonies took place on top, including sacrifice. Some pyramids had tombs inside. Palaces – Single story stone buildings with stone beds, sewage systems, toilets and steam baths. Close to pyramids. Observatories – buildings built to view movements of planets.
Important people	
King Pacal	Ruler of Palenque from age 12-80. Buried in the temple of inscriptions at Palenque. His body was painted red and he wears a jade death mask. His coffin is intricately decorated and gave rise to theories about Mayan Astronauts
Alberto Ruz Lhuillier	Mexican archaeologist who discovered the entrance to the tomb of King Pacal in 1948. He is buried opposite the temple of the inscriptions in Palenque
Important numbers	
3	They had three calendars: one with 365 days which kept track of the movements in the sky; one with 260 days used for sacred rituals and the long count calendar which counted the days since they believed creation began.
0	They used symbols for numbers- they were one of the first civilisations to recognise the number zero.
4	Number of Mayan books remaining
6 million	Approximate number of people living in Mesoamerica today who consider themselves Maya.