

Big ideas

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.
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.

Key Inventions & Discoveries

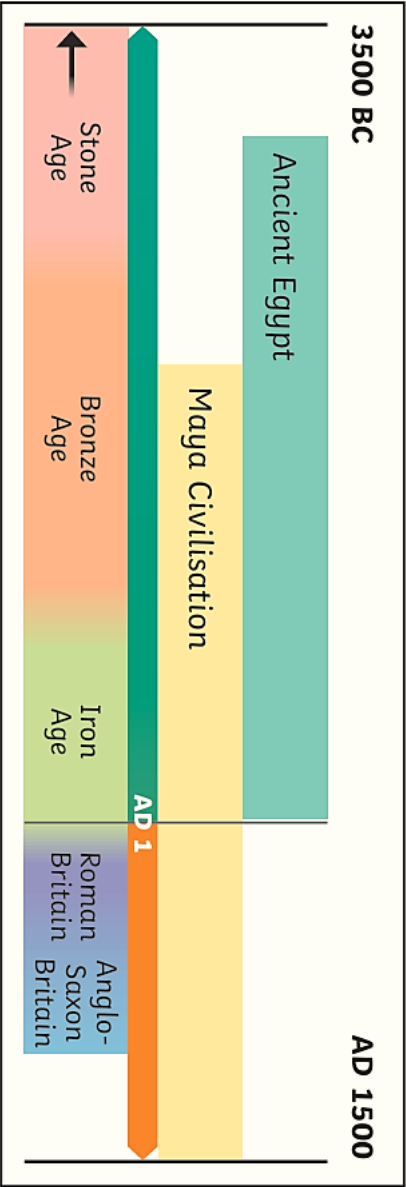
- **Calendar & Astronomy:** Developed a 365-day solar calendar and accurately tracked celestial movements.
- **Mathematics & Numbers:** Developed an advanced base-20 number system and created the concept of zero.
- **Writing System:** Invented a complex hieroglyphic writing system using glyphs to record language and history.
- **Rubber:** Created rubber using latex to make game balls and waterproof materials.
- **Chocolate:** Cultivated cacao beans to prepare hot and cold chocolate beverages.
- **Corbel Arch:** Designed specialized stone arches to construct strong pyramids and monuments.

Artefacts

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5	•	••	•••	••••
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- **Pottery:** Painted vessels depict scenes of daily life, royal court rituals, and mythology.
- **Jade Carvings:** Jade masks and jewellery show the status of rulers and skill of craftspeople.
- **Stelae:** Carved stone monuments record key dates, historical events, and ruler lineages.
- **Obsidian & Flint:** Sharp blades and tools reveal trade networks and technology.



Daily Life

- Most Maya were farmers growing crops such as maize, beans, and squash.
- Men worked in the fields, while women prepared food, wove textiles, and managed the household.
- Society was structured, with nobles, priests, and rulers holding high status in city-states.
- Children learned trade skills and domestic tasks early to support their families.

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



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.