



How do we know who the Maya were and what they believed?



Summary: The Maya civilisation developed in Central America (modern-day Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras) from around 2000 BC. Cities such as Tikal, Palenque and Chichén Itzá were built in rainforest regions and contained temples, pyramids and marketplaces, connected through trade.



The Maya were an advanced civilisation who developed mathematics, astronomy and a writing system using glyphs. These glyphs recorded rulers, events and religious beliefs. They also created accurate calendars based on the stars.

Maya society included kings, priests, nobles, merchants and farmers, who farmed crops such as maize. Religion was central to life. The Maya believed in many gods and held ceremonies in temples to honour them.

Historians learn about the Maya through artefacts, buildings, writing and archaeology. Much evidence was destroyed, so historians must interpret surviving sources carefully. Over time, new discoveries and the decoding of glyphs have changed what we know.

Key Takeaways:

- The Maya civilisation developed in Central America (modern-day Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras) from around 2000 BC



- The Maya built impressive cities, temples and pyramids, including Tikal, Palenque and Chichén Itzá
- The Maya believed in many gods and religion was an important part of everyday life.
- The gods were connected to nature, including the sun, rain and maize.
- The Maya developed a writing system using glyphs, which recorded information about rulers, beliefs and important events

Key Concepts:



Cause and
Consequence



Change and
Continuity



Historical
Significance



Similarity and
Difference

Vocabulary: **Archaeologist**– a person who studies remains from the past to learn about history



Artefact– an object made or used by people in the past that helps historians understand their lives

Belief– something people think is true, especially about religion or gods

Civilisation– a group of people who lived in organised cities with their own government, beliefs and way of life

Glyph– a symbol used in Maya writing to record information about beliefs, rulers and event

Inference– working out what something means using clues from evidence.

Schema Strands:



Beliefs and
Attitudes



Exploration
& Settlement



Innovation &
Legacy