



THE ANCIENT MAYA

The Maya were one of the greatest civilisations of ancient times. Their culture was established for thousands of years and remained until the Spanish conquered much of Central America in the 16th century. Their descendants still live there today and many of them speak the Mayan languages.

WHERE DID MAYAN PEOPLE LIVE?

The Maya civilization was one of the most dominant indigenous societies of Mesoamerica (a term used to describe Mexico and Central America before the 16th century Spanish conquest). They lived across many tropical countries like Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Belize and Honduras.

WHAT ARE THEY FAMOUS FOR?

The Maya excelled at agriculture, pottery, hieroglyph writing, calendar making and mathematics and they left behind an astonishing amount of impressive architecture and artwork. They built, and lived in, great stone cities and some ruins can still be seen today.

They are most famous for their pyramids, which usually had a temple built on the top. They had steep steps built into the sides and the leader would speak to the congregation from the top. Many of the temples were built to honour the gods. Many pyramids were sometimes built with secret doors, tunnels and traps.

The most famous landmark still standing today is the Kukulcan Temple in the Mexican area of Chichen Itza. It is one of the Wonders of the World. Many of the sites in Chichen Itza are known for their unusual sounds. If you clap once from one end of the ball court, it produces nine echoes in the middle of the court. Additionally, a clap in front of the Kukulcan Pyramid creates an echo resembling the sound of a serpent.



FOOD

The most important food that the Maya people grew was maize. They made all types of food from maize including tortillas, porridge and drinks. They also planted and harvested beans, squash and chillies. For meat, the Maya hunted and caught fish, iguanas, frogs, snakes, ducks and turkeys.

DID YOU KNOW?

Among the earliest Maya a single language existed, but over time lots of Mayan languages were spoken. In modern-day Mexico and Central America, around 5 million people speak around 70 Mayan languages as well as Spanish.

FIND OUT MORE:

https://www.ducksters.com/history/aztec_maya_inca.php

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. In which countries did the Maya live in?
2. Who conquered the Mayan countries?
3. The famous pyramid buildings were usually used as what?



4. What is the most famous temple called?
5. If you clap your hands in Chichen Itza, what animal's sound can be heard in the echo?
6. What was their most important food source?
7. How many Mayan languages still exist today?
8. How many people can still speak a Mayan language today?
9. What alphabet did the Mayans write with?
10. In which century did the Mayan civilisation no longer exist?