

Key Vocabulary	
Maya	The indigenous people of the Yucatan and other areas of Central America.
ancient	Something in the very distant past and no longer in existence.
civilization	A society, culture and particular way of life in a certain era.
temple	A building devoted to the worship of god or gods.
city-states	A city and the surrounding areas which have their own ruler.
archaeologist	A person who studies human history and prehistory by examining sites and
god/goddess	A superhuman being or spirit who is worshipped.
ancestor	A person in your family that lived before you.
worship	To show devotion to a person or a god/goddess.
sacrifice	Killing an animal or person in an act of worship.
maize	A plant originating in Central America—also known as corn.
cacao	Seeds from a tree that you can make chocolate from.
glyphs	A character or symbol that stands for a word or part of a word.
base-20	A number system which works in groups of 20.
invaders	People who enter a country or region so that they can take it over.



Mayan Entertainment

Although much of the Maya life was spent doing hard work, they did enjoy entertainment as well. A lot of their entertainment was based around religious ceremonies. They played music, danced, and played games such as the Maya ball game. They also played board and dice games, such as 'Bul' and 'Patolli'.

Who were the Ancient Mayans?

- The Ancient Maya built an advanced civilization and along the coasts of Central America (Mesoamerica). This was the strip of land joining North and South America.
- Although historians think that the Maya's ancestors reached Central America about 11,000 years ago, the Mayan civilization started in around 1700BC but it was at its strongest between 250AD and 900AD.
- The Ancient Maya people shared a common culture and religion but they lived in different city-states. Each city-state had its own ruler.



Society

Each city-state was controlled by a king or occasionally a queen. Mayan society was organised into classes. The nobles and priests were at the top. Below them were the craftsmen, traders and warriors. At the bottom were farmers and then slaves. Mayan children nearly all children grew up to do the same job as their parents.

The priests were very powerful and interpreted the will of the gods, telling people things like when to plant crops, who to marry and when to go to war.

Farmers grew maize (corn), sweet potatoes, beans chillies and squash.

Gods

The Maya believed in many gods, each representing a different part of life. These gods had to be pleased so Maya communities made regular offerings to them, in the form of animal (and sometimes human) sacrifices. The most important god was Itzamna who was the creator of the universe, ruler of the gods and thought to be the inventor of the Mayan language and calendar.

Mayan Warriors



Mayan armies were made up of ordinary men, who were called away from their farms. They were led by kings and elite warriors. As the Maya did not have the technology to make metal, they made their weapons from obsidian, a sharp volcanic glass. Shields were made of wood and feathers. In battle Mayan warriors fought at close range with spears, clubs and daggers. Warriors only fought during the day.