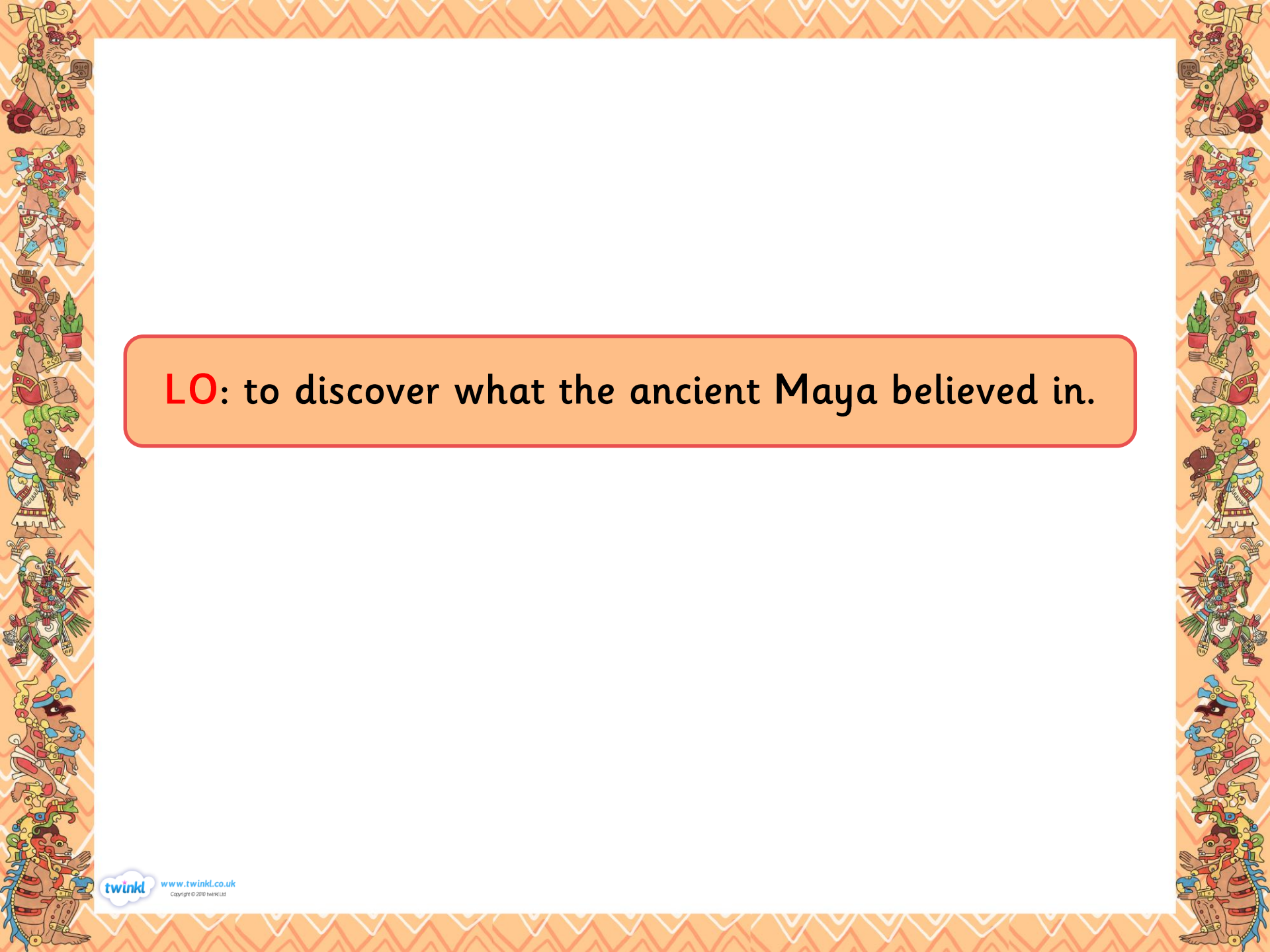


The Maya Civilisation

Gods, Religion and Beliefs



A decorative border surrounds the page, featuring a repeating pattern of colorful, stylized figures from Mesoamerican cultures, including Mayans and Aztecs. The figures are depicted in various poses, some holding objects, and are set against a background of orange and white geometric patterns.

LO: to discover what the ancient Maya believed in.

Creation According the Ancient Maya

The gods made animals, but the animals didn't speak to them.

The gods tried to make humans out of clay but they were limp, and melted in the rains.

They made humans out of wood but the rains drowned them.

Eventually they made humans from zucan (maize dough) and this was a success.

The Universe According to the Ancient Maya

The earth (Middleworld) is square and flat.

The earth rests on the back of a huge creature (like a turtle or crocodile)

A giant tree grows at the centre of the earth (Middleworld), its roots reach down to the underworld and its branches reach to the Upperworld.

The four compass directions are all linked with a colour:

North = WHITE - associated with ancestors who have died

East = RED - where the sun rises

South = YELLOW - the right hand of the sun

West = BLACK - death and the underworld

The Underworld

The underworld was called Xibalba, which means 'place of fear'.

It was reached through caves and tunnels.

Maya gods of death, who looked like jaguars, lived in the underworld.

The Maya believed that when they died their souls travelled to the underworld.



The Gods

The Ancient Maya had many, many gods (over 150!), only a few of which are mentioned by the same name in different sources.

Many of them had overlapping roles and names.

Some had human form, some took the form of an animal, others were a phenomena of nature.

Itzamna

One of the creator gods.

Inventor of writing.

Patron of learning.

Portrayed in human form as an old man with no teeth and a large nose.



Kukulcan

Supreme god.

God of the four elements with the following items associated with each one:

- maize-ear (earth)
- a fish (water)
- lizard (fire)
- vulture (air)

One of the creator gods.

God of resurrection and reincarnation .

His name means 'feathered serpent'.



Ix Chel

Wife of Itzamnaaj.

Goddess of childbirth, healing,
weaving and the moon.

Portrayed in human form wearing a
headdress of snakes entangled in her
hair, and toes and fingers that
looked like jaguar claws.

Capable of causing floods and
destruction.

The mother of many other gods.



Hun Ixim- Maize God

From his head sprouted an ear of
maize.

Was important because the diet of
the Maya was 80% maize and they
relied on the harvest being
successful.

Also important because humans were
created from maize dough by the
gods.



Chac - Rain God

Brought the rain needed to make
crops grow.

Created storms, thunder and
lightning.

Caused wars and human sacrifice

Portrayed as a human with a curling
snout and reptile fangs.



Kinich Ahau - Sun God

Travelled across the sky during the
day.

Sunk below the earth and entered
the underworld every night, where
he became a jaguar god.



Ah Puch

Death god.

Portrayed as a human with a skeletal nose, jaw and spine and a body covered in hideous spots.



Religious Rituals

The ancient Maya would perform rituals to gain favour with the gods.

Public festivals related to special dates on the Maya calendar or occasions to plead for a healthy harvest, the health of a ruler, or to win a war.

Before a ritual or festival, people would go without certain food or pierce their tongues, lips, cheeks or ears to offer a sacrifice of human blood.

The festivals were colourful and noisy with processions, banners, drums and trumpets.

Blood Letting

Stone carvings show rulers and nobles giving blood sacrifices.

They had a lot to lose if they didn't keep the gods happy.

The gods could keep them in power, help defeat their enemies and let them into the Upperworld when they died.

This lintel shows Shield Jaguar, the warrior king of Yaxchilan, standing over his wife, Lady Xook, holding an enormous flaming torch. Lady Xook is pulling a thorn-studded rope through her tongue in an act of blood letting to honour the gods.



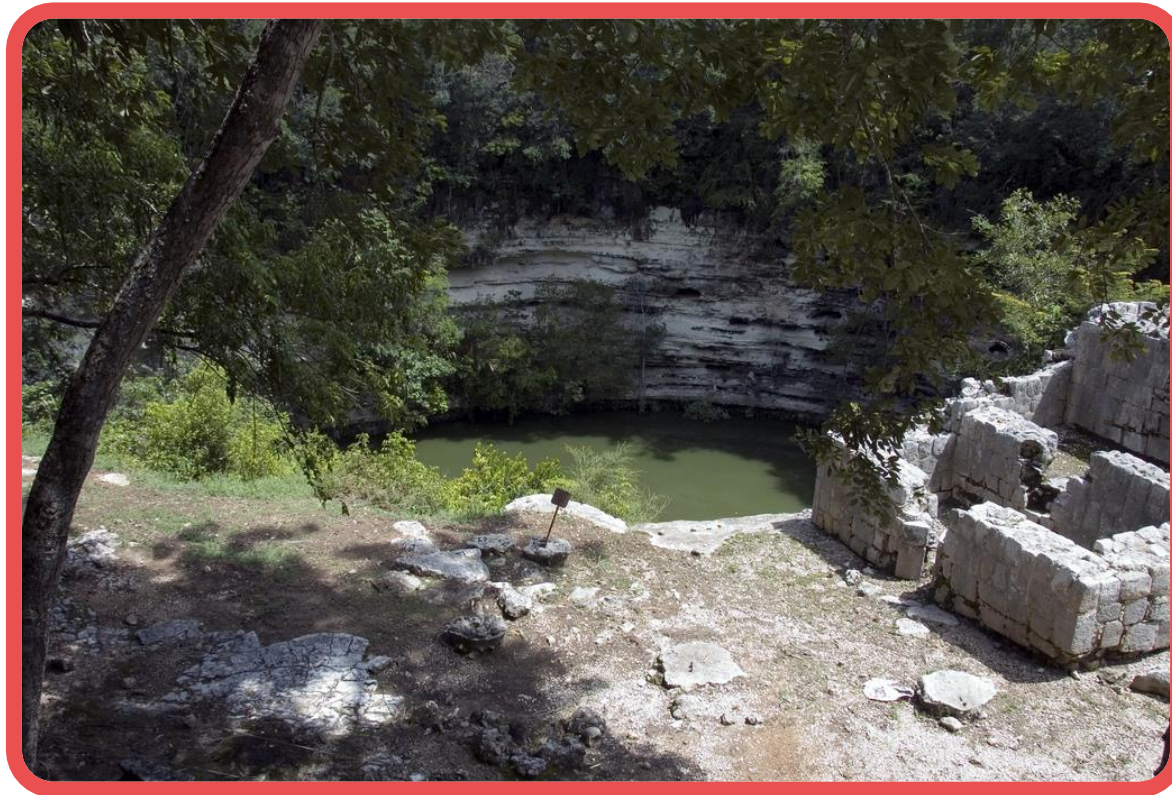
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Human Sacrifice

One of the main purposes for fighting battles was to take captives that could then be sacrificed (killed).

These human sacrifices were carried out by the priests in order to appease the Mayan Gods.

There is plenty of evidence of these practises at Chichen Itza.



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Victims could be thrown into the 'Well of Sacrifice'
(but not all that often).

The Wall of Skulls



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