

# Keystage history

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Knowledge organiser

## Mayan civilization

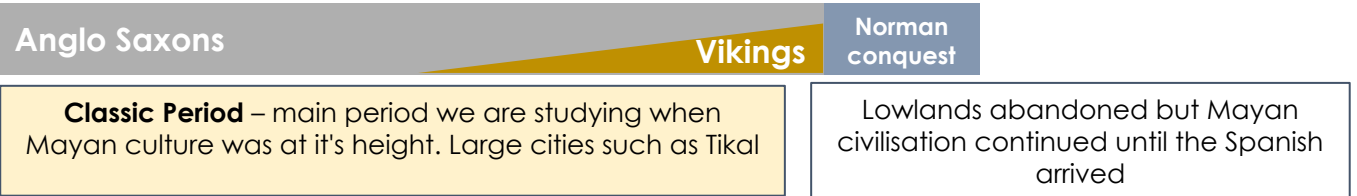


# Mayan civilisation

## Why we are learning about Mayan civilisation

The height of Maya civilization came at the time when the Saxons were fighting the Vikings in Britain, but it was the Mayan society that was in many ways more advanced with its large cities, sophisticated stone buildings, such as temples, and complicated systems for writing and counting. Although we might think that they were not very civilized because they believed the gods needed offerings of human sacrifice, in fact they were very knowledgeable about the stars and even had their own calendars. By the 1520s arrival of the Spanish forced the Mayans to give up their own gods and become Christian. Luckily the Spanish did not destroy all the wonderful ,recently discovered, architecture and artefacts that we can still see today, as testament to the Mayan's skill.

### Meanwhile in Britain



A large purple arrow points from left to right, containing the following dates: 2000 BC, 500 BC, 250 BC, 650 AD, 900 AD, 1500 AD, 1540 AD, 1952 AD, and Today.

| Date    | Event  | Image |
|---------|--|-------|
| 2000 BC | Maya start to develop religious ideas        |       |
| 500 BC  | First large settlements                      |       |
| 250 BC  | Pakal builds Palenque pyramids               |       |
| 650 AD  | Chichen Itza ball court                      |       |
| 900 AD  | Tikal, Copan, Palenque abandoned             |       |
| 1500 AD | Spanish conquest                             |       |
| 1540 AD | Tomb of Pakal is discovered inside a pyramid |       |
| 1952 AD | Tomb of Pakal is discovered inside a pyramid |       |
| Today   |  |       |

## Key questions

**KQ1**  
Why do we study the Maya in history?

**KQ2**  
How did the Maya manage to become so important?

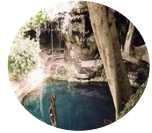
**KQ3**  
What was everyday life in Mayan civilization?

**KQ4**  
How can we know what was life like for the Mayan people 1,000 years ago?

**KQ5**  
If the Maya were so civilized why then did they carry out human sacrifice?

**KQ6**  
Why did the Mayan empire decline?

## Key vocabulary



### Cenote

Sink hole formed by collapse of rock into which Maya threw offerings



### Codex-plural is codices

Collection of manuscript pages held together into early form of book



### Glyph

Written symbol used to present spoken words



### Hieroglyph

System of writing used by ancient Mayas made up of symbols that stand for words or syllables



### Jade

Green stone used to make wonderful jewels



### Obsidian

Black glassy rock formed when volcanic lava cools



### Quetzal

Colourful tropical bird very important to the maya



### Ritual

Act that is always performed in same way as part of a religious ceremony

## Top takeaways

1. In the year 1000 settlements like Chichen Itza were among the largest settlements anywhere in the world and Chichen Itza is probably the best preserved of any city in the world from this time.
2. After about the year AD830 very little new construction took place at Chichen Itza. The last glyph with a date on comes from AD910. The reasons why the Mayan declined at that time (they weren't entirely wiped out) was probably due to drought and overworking of the soil.
3. The Mayans farmed on land they terraced and made fertile. Their staple diet was maize and even worshiped maize as a god. They drank chocolate but not as we know it. It was unsweetened and spiced with chilli peppers. They even had a frother!
4. They built pyramids with temples on top and even had an amazing astronomical observatory
5. The Maya worshipped many gods and believed they needed offerings of blood.
6. We know about the Maya from their writings in hieroglyphics, their advanced number system and the buildings such as the ball court that are still there today



### Slash and burn

Way of clearing farmland by slashing away most vegetation then burning the rest



### Stelae

Upright stone slabs or pillars with inscriptions or design



# Map of Mayan Empire

