

Ancient Maya

Big Question: Why were the Mayans considered to be such an advanced civilization?





Vocabulary		
1	Maya	The indigenous people of Yucatan and other areas of Central America.
2	ancient	Something in the very distant past and no longer in existence.
3	civilization	A culture, society and way of life in a certain area.
4	temple	A building devoted to the worship of God or Gods.
5	city-states	A city and the surrounding area which has their own ruler.
6	ancestor	A person in your family that lived before you
7	sacrifice	Killing an animal or person as an act of worship
8	priest	Someone who performs religious duties and ceremonies.
9	offerings	Something that you give to someone (or the Gods)
10	corn	A plant originating in South America- also known as Maize
11	cacao	Seeds from a tree that you can make chocolate from
12	codices	Ancient hand-written texts. Maya codices could be unfolded like a concertina.
13	glyphs	A character or symbol that stands for a word or part of a word.
14	base-20	A number system that works in groups of 20
15	invaders	People who enter a country so they can take it over.
16	decline	To go down or decrease slowly.
17	highlands	An area of high or mountainous land
18	lowlands	Low-lying country
19	settlements	A place where people establish a community.

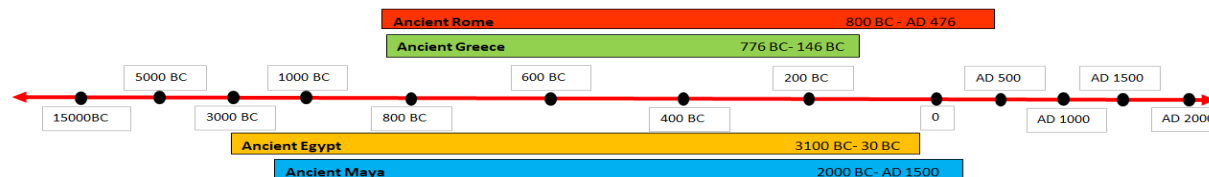
Who were the Ancient Maya?

The Ancient Maya were people who made their homes in an area known as **Mesoamerica**. This is the strip of land joining North and South America together. The Ancient Maya people shared a common culture and religion but they lived in different city states, each with its own ruler.



2000 BC	The Maya civilization comes into being in Central America.
600 BC	Successful farming means cities grow larger.
500 BC	First pyramids built
400 BC	Evidence of writing
300 BC	Cities such as El Mirador become large and powerful. Cities ruled by kings and queens.
400 BC-900 BC	The Mayan 'Golden Age.'
AD 900	Cities in the rainforest are abandoned due to an extensive drought. People move North to the highlands of Guatemala and the Yucatan.
AD 1000	Cities like Chichen Itza are still thriving.
AD 1500s	The Spanish arrive in South America and set out to destroy the remaining elements of Maya civilization as part of their conquest.
AD 2022	Descendants of the Ancient Maya still live today.

Central America	Tikal	Chichen Itza	Great Ball Court	Religion	Death
 <p>A region found in the southern tip of North America where the continent joins with South America. The Ancient Maya were a great civilization located here.</p>	 <p>Tikal is the ruin of a great Ancient Mayan city. It is located in a rainforest in modern day Guatemala and was one of the most powerful Mayan cities. The Tikal Temple is 47 metres high.</p>	 <p>Chichen Itza was built by the Ancient Maya in the Northern Lowlands. It was one of the largest cities.</p>	 <p>The Great Ball Court is located in Chichen Itza but ball courts like this one were found across the Mayan lands. Here they watched and played 'Pok-a-Tok'. The game was a life or death battle.</p>	<p>The Maya believed in and worshipped a number of different Gods. They believed the Gods could both help and hurt them. They would dance and sing and sometimes make offerings of blood to the Gods. It was believed that priests could communicate directly with the Gods. They would perform different rituals to appeal to the Gods.</p>	<p>The Maya believed the Earth (the Middleworld) was large and flat and rested on the back of a creature such as a turtle. On the Middleworld grew a tree whose branches reached up the Upperworld (the heavens) and roots reached down to the Underworld which was guarded by gods of death who looked like jaguars.</p>



An artist's impression of El Mirador



