Temples of Doom: The Maya Civilisation

What impact did the Maya have on our world?

Summary

Centred around the country now known as Guatemala, the Maya Empire was at its most powerful around 600 A.D. The Maya are known for their skilled agriculture, pottery, hieroglyphic writing, calendar making and mathematics. They left behind an impressive amount of architecture and symbolic artwork. The Maya were deeply religious and worshipped various gods. They performed elaborate religious rituals and ceremonies in order to please them.

Vocabulary List

ancient
Belonging to the very distant past and no longer in existence.

astronomy
The branch of science which deals with space and the physical universe as a whole.

cacao
Seeds that they Maya used to make chocolate.

cenote
A sinkhole or pit filled with water. They were sources of water for the Maya.

Chichen Itza
The most powerful city.

civilisation
The society, culture and way of life of a particular area.

Classic Period
The golden age of the Maya civilization.

glyph
A symbol used in writing.

Itzamma
The main god of the Maya who created the Earth.

Mesoamerica
The region in which the Maya lived, spanning over Mexico and parts of Southern America.

Popol Vuh
A book or codex that described Maya religion and mythology.

pyramid
The Maya built step pyramids with flat tops. At the top, they built a temple to their gods.

sacrifice
To give up something valued for the sake of something else.

settlement
A place where people have come to live and have built homes.

temple
A building devoted to the worship of god or gods.

Yucatan Peninsula
An area in south-eastern Mexico where some of the Maya civilization lived.

Timeline

2000 BC Farming villages begin to form across the Maya region.

1100 BC Settlements begin to appear.

700 BC Maya writing is developed.

100 BC The first Maya Pyramids are built.

900 - 1200 AD El Castillo is built.

250 AD Beginning of the Classic Period.

1000 AD Chichen Itza is the most powerful city.

1502 AD First contact with European invaders/explorers.

Top 5 Maya Facts

1. The Maya played the earliest team sport in the world!

2. Flat foreheads were fashionable so they would put baby’s heads in a press to squash them.

3. It was considered beautiful to be cross-eyed so parents would hang balls in-between their children’s eyes to make them look inwards.

4. The Maya sacrificed humans for religious and medical reasons. It was an honour to be sacrificed!

5. Noblewomen would file their teeth into sharp points.

Hello: Ba’ax ka wa’alik
Welcome: Kilmak ‘oolal
Thank you: Dios bo’otik

Language

Map