

Year 6 Mayan Civilisation History and Geography Knowledge Organiser

Key vocabulary

Mesoamerica	Historic region comprising the following modern-day Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.
Guatemala	Central American country south of Mexico.
Hierarchy	System that ranks according to status.
Civilisation	The society, culture, and way of life of a particular area.
Central America	A region of the Americas, bordered by Mexico to the North.
Settlement	A small community of people.
City state	A small independent state consisting of a single city.
Climate zones	Areas with distinct climates.
Codex / codices	Books made of paper bark.
Hieroglyph	A character in pictorial writing.
New Wonders of the World	A list of 7 places around the world of extreme beauty/ wonder.



Key knowledge:

- The Maya civilisation extended from what is now **South East Mexico through Central America (Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador)**.
- This area included highland and lowland **settlements** and a variety of **climate zones, including rainforest**. **Crops** grown in the lowlands were **traded** for mineral ores and rocks from the mountainous areas.
- Modern-day Guatemala has many **volcanoes**, some of which are active, due to it's position over where two tectonic plates meet.
- Archaeological evidence suggests that Maya settlement in **Mesoamerica** probably dates from the third millennium BC.
- The Mayans built many amazing cities and temples, including Chichen Itza (Mexico) and Tikal (Guatemala)
- Maya society was formed of a number of **city states each with their own ruler**. Each city was surrounded by rural settlements.
- At the top of Maya society were the **King** and **Royal family** who were believed to be closely linked to the gods. An educated elite of scribes, priests and nobles formed the **ruling class**. They occupied the finest buildings in the city.
- The Maya were sophisticated **mathematicians** who made use of the number zero. They used base 20 in their calculations. They were keen **astronomers** who were able to predict solar eclipses. Their complex **calendar** system was one of the most accurate of the ancient world.
- No one knows for sure why the Maya civilisation went into **decline**. Possible explanations involve the overuse and exhaustion of farming land, prolonged drought, misrule, warfare and disease.

Key questions:

- Who were the Maya and where did they live?
- Why do we study the Maya in History?
- What was life like for the Ancient Maya and how do we know?
- What are the geographical features of the area?
- What happened to the Maya?

