



<b>achievement</b> 🔑	A significant accomplishment or contribution that had a lasting impact.	<b>creation</b> 🔑	Something being made.
<b>ancient</b> 🔑	From a very long time ago.	<b>currency</b> 🔑	The type of money that a country uses for buying and selling goods and services.
<b>archivist</b>	Someone who takes care of important documents and records, making sure they are safely kept and can be looked at in the future.	<b>decline</b> 🔑	A situation where something becomes less important or successful.
<b>archaeologist</b>	Someone who studies the buildings, graves, tools and other objects of people who lived in the past.	<b>Mesoamerica</b>	A historical region in Central America made up of the modern-day countries of northern Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize and central to southern Mexico.
<b>categorise</b>	To put people or things into groups with the same features.	<b>ritual</b> 🔑	A set of actions or ceremonies performed in a fixed way, sometimes for religious purposes.
<b>civilisation</b> 🔑	A large group of people with a common language, way of life and governance.	<b>theory</b>	An idea that is intended to explain facts or events, often based on some evidence.



Key vocabulary

Maya settlements in a rainforest

The Ancient Maya faced many challenges settling in the rainforest, including dangerous animals, dense vegetation and shady conditions, which made growing crops difficult. They solved these problems by slashing and burning trees to clear rainforest areas, becoming adaptable hunters and developing crops that could grow successfully in the conditions, such as cacao and maize.



Ancient Maya vocabulary bank

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## Maya inventions

The Ancient Maya developed many things and each invention was linked to their beliefs about the world. Some examples include the ball game, which was a form of telling stories about heroes and gods; calendars to know when to plant their crops and celebrate festivals that honoured the stars and the seasons; temples where people went to give gifts to their gods and writing used to write down important things, including stories about gods and goddesses.

Credit: Heritage Image Partnership Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

## Maya city states

Ancient Maya cities such as Tikal thrived in the Classic period. The cities had a grand plaza (main street) on which the most important buildings (such as temples, observatory towers, ball courts and palaces) were found. Ordinary people lived in houses on the outskirts of the city and the cities themselves were connected by roads. Historians have learned more about these cities from recent archaeological discoveries in the rainforest (e.g. hieroglyphics were discovered in the buildings).



## Ancient Maya periods

### Pre-Classic period

From 2000 BC to AD 250, the Ancient Maya went from hunter-gatherers (hunting animals and gathering food from nature) to living in cities.

### Classic period

From AD 250 to AD 900, the Ancient Maya thrived, invented and flourished.

### Post-Classic period

From AD 900 to 1524, this period saw the development of Chichen Itza, one of the largest and most magnificent Ancient Maya cities.

### Contact and Spanish conquest period

From 1524 to 1697, the Ancient Maya had more contact with the Europeans and the Spanish took control.