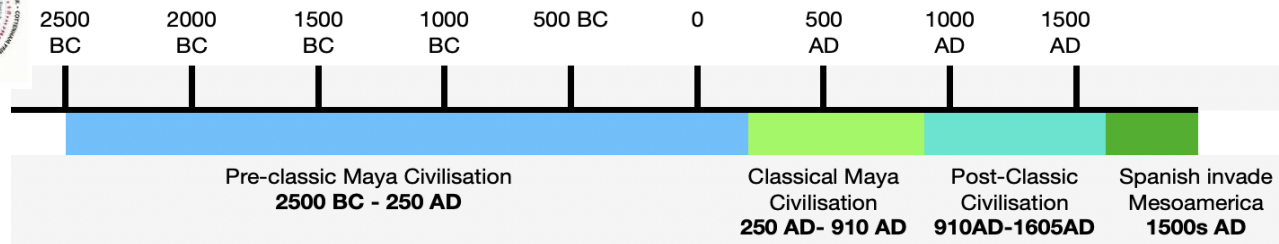




Knowledge Organiser: Year 6 History: The Ancient Maya



Overview

The Ancient Maya lived in part of Central America known as **Mesoamerica**. They built up huge city-states, each lead by different rulers. The Maya did not unify into one **empire**, but they shared a common **culture** and religion.

The Maya **civilisation** was prominent for nearly **2,700 years** until it began to 'collapse'. Explanations for this have included soil depletion and deforestation; over population and warfare; earthquakes and hurricanes and drought.

In the early 1500s, Mesoamerica was invaded by the Spanish, with devastating consequences. The final Maya cities were conquered in 1697.

How do we know about the Ancient Maya and what caused their decline?



The Ancient Maya:

- created the first complete written language in the Americas, using **hieroglyphs**.
- created one of the first sophisticated **number systems** that used **zero**.
- observed the night skies and developed sophisticated **calendars**.
- built **cities** containing a **central plaza** and included **palaces, pyramids, observatories** and **ball courts**.
- were **polytheistic**
- practised both human and animal **sacrifice**.

Prior Knowledge

Civilisation	An organised society with its own culture or way of life.
Empire	A group of countries or states that are ruled over by a single person or sovereign state.
War	A state of armed conflict between different countries or different groups.
Invasion	Entering a place with armed force to take it over.
City-states	Independent cities each with their own ruler, not a unified country.
Archaeology	The study of objects that belonged to people who lived in the past.

Tier 3

Milpa	The Maya system of agriculture which allowed crops to grow in difficult environments. Important crops include cacao and maize .
Culture	The ideas, customs and social behaviour of a group of people or society.
Codices	Ancient Maya folded books, painted on bark.
Hieroglyph	A picture representing a word, syllable or sound.
Pok-ta-pok	A ball game that had religious and ritual associations.
Haab	Solar calendar made up of 365 days.
Tzolk'in	Sacred calendar made up of 260 days.
Long Count Calendar	Counted the days since the Maya believed creation began.
Polytheistic religion	The belief in more than one god or goddess.
Sacrifice	The killing of animals or humans as an offering to a god.
Diego De Landa	Spanish Bishop who led a violent attack against the Maya and burnt their codices in 1562.