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## The Maya Civilization

The Maya (MAH yuh) were an American Indian people who developed a magnificent civilization in Mesoamerica, a region of Mexico and Central America. The Maya produced remarkable architecture, painting, pottery, and sculpture. They also made great advancements in astronomy and mathematics. They were one of the first peoples in the Western Hemisphere to develop an advanced form of writing. Today, many people of Mexico and Central America still carry on some of the traditional Maya customs.

First, go to **[www.worldbookonline.com](http://www.worldbookonline.com)**  
Then, click on “Advanced.” If prompted, log on with  
your ID and Password.

### Find It!

Use the World Book search tool to find the answers to the questions below. Since this activity is about the Maya, it is recommended you start by searching the key word “Maya.” In some questions, fill in the correct term in the blank space to complete the sentence. In other questions, you may need to write a short paragraph to answer the question.

- The Maya civilization covered an area that today makes up Southern Mexico and parts of four countries in Central America. These countries are: \_\_\_\_\_;  
\_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_; and \_\_\_\_\_.
- Religion was central to the daily life of the Maya people. A Maya manuscript lists more than \_\_\_\_\_ gods that were worshipped by the Maya.
- The Maya built large stone pyramids. How were the pyramids used?
- Compare the special ceremonies observed after the death of Maya rulers and the common citizens. How were commoners treated compared to the Maya rulers?

Common citizens:

Maya rulers:

**\*Users of the Advanced database can find extension activities at the end of this webquest.**

## Maya rulers:

5. The Maya never united to form a single, centrally governed nation. How were the cities of the Maya civilization governed?
6. Large stone monuments called \_\_\_\_\_ were used to record important dates and to take note of great events in the lives of Maya rulers and the rulers' families.
7. In Maya mathematics, the number one was represented by a \_\_\_\_\_, while a \_\_\_\_\_ represented the number five.
8. The Maya had two different kinds of calendars. Describe the two and how they were different.  
A.  
  
B.
9. Scholars divide Maya history into three periods. These are the \_\_\_\_\_ Period; the \_\_\_\_\_ Period; and the \_\_\_\_\_ Period.
10. Around 800 B.C., a nearby culture lived west of the earliest Maya and influenced the development of Maya civilization. This culture is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
11. The Spanish conquered the last independent Maya city in 1697. But did the Maya civilization really disappear? What parts of Maya culture still exist today?

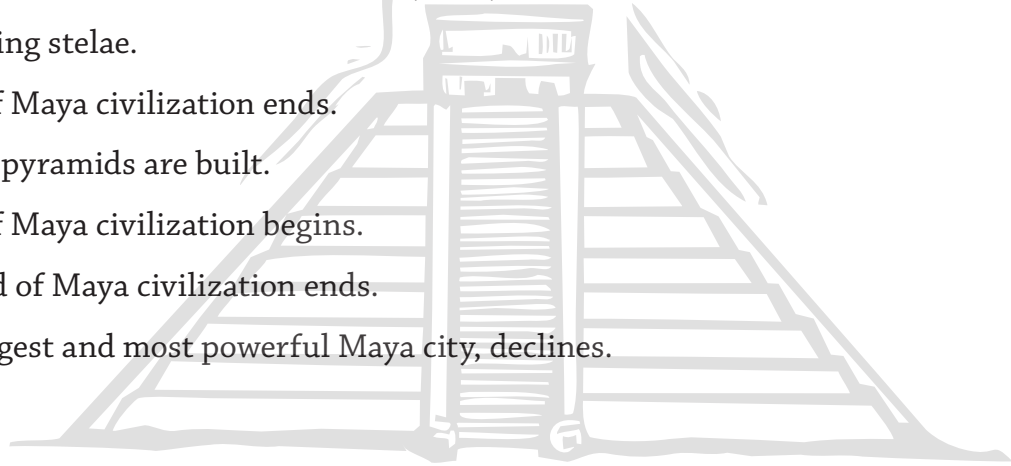
## See It!

12. Within the World Book article Maya, you will find the picture titled "Codex Cortesiano." Study the picture and write a description of how Maya writing is different from your writing.
13. Within the World Book article Maya, you will find the picture titled "Mayan Mural." Study the picture and read the image caption. Explain the visual cues that let you know if a character in the painting is high status or low status. Choose three characters and describe who they are and how you know. Include a description of what they are doing and possibly feeling in the scene captured by the artist.

## Timeline:

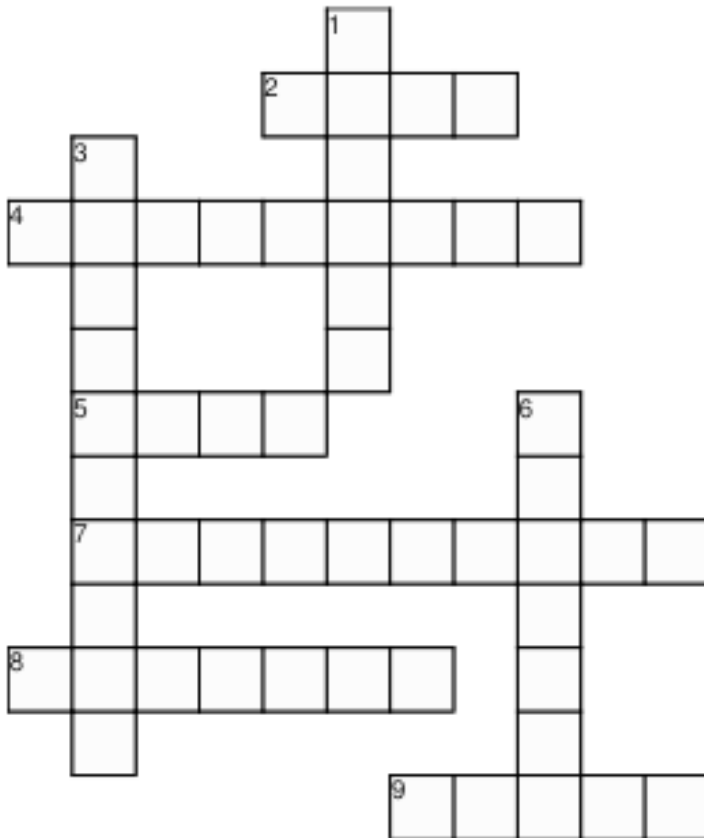
In the timeline below, place the event from Maya history in the correct sequence:


- A. The Classic Period of Maya civilization reaches its peak.
- B. The first farmers settle the lowlands of northern Guatemala.
- C. The leaders of Maya cities revolt against Mayapán rulers and defeat them.
- D. Spanish soldiers conquer the last independent Maya city.
- E. The Maya stop erecting stelae.
- F. The Classic Period of Maya civilization ends.
- G. The first large Maya pyramids are built.
- H. The Classic Period of Maya civilization begins.
- I. The Preclassic Period of Maya civilization ends.
- J. Chichén Itzá, the largest and most powerful Maya city, declines.



## What's the Word?

Use the clues below to solve the crossword puzzle. All of the answers can be found within the World Book article "Maya." You may use context clues to determine the meaning of each word. You may also double-click on the word to access the online dictionary.



Across:

2. Chichén \_\_\_\_\_ is the name of the city that controlled large parts of the Maya population before 1200 A.D.
4. A strip of cloth Maya men tied around their hips and passed between their legs.
5. The name of a Maya rain God.
7. The Maya hunted these armored animals
8. Around 1200 A.D. this city became the chief Mayan city.
9. The features of this bird were an important Maya trade item.

Down:

1. The large stone monuments the Maya used to record events.
3. This is the name of the Maya Sun God.
6. This is the name of an alcoholic drink the Maya made from corn.

## Word Search!

Corn was the principal food of the Maya, and the women prepared it in a variety of ways. The Maya also raised many crops that are familiar foods today. Find the names of foods eaten by the Maya hidden within the puzzle by reading the definitions below. You may use context clues to determine the meaning of each word. You may also double-click on the word to access the online dictionary. In the Word Search Puzzle below, words may be spelled backwards, forward, or diagonally.

### Clues:

1. A tropical fruit shaped like a pear, with a dark-green skin and a very large seed.  
Its yellow-green pulp has a nutty flavor and is used in salads and soups.
2. A small, kidney-shaped nut that is good to eat.
3. A hot-tasting seedpod of a tropical plant often used for sauces and salsa.
4. A very popular food made by roasting and grinding cacao seeds.
5. A vegetable with large, fleshy edible roots, usually dark yellow to orange.
6. A food made of corn meal stuffed with meat.
7. A thin, round flatbread made from corn meal.
8. A tropical tree or shrub with a sweet yellow or red, round or pear-shaped fruit

A	P	W	K	L	Z	W	N	S	B	F
Q	R	O	M	P	X	R	S	W	E	C
A	V	O	C	A	D	O	B	E	D	X
C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E	P	W
B	R	F	W	M	C	A	F	T	L	O
C	H	I	L	I	P	E	P	P	E	R
G	B	V	A	L	L	I	T	R	O	T
U	S	W	R	A	P	W	X	T	S	A
A	P	I	M	O	Z	B	L	A	M	U
V	C	A	S	H	E	W	K	T	O	R
A	T	N	O	E	W	S	L	O	P	F

### **Extension activity 1:** Maya Trading Site

Trade was essential in the Maya civilization. What kinds of goods were traded among Maya cities and how do you think they may have been used? Once you have that information, imagine that you are the first Mayan to discover an ancient version of the Internet, and you want to use it to trade with other cities. Create a catalogue page for an online store that includes important information for the goods used in trade. Make sure you include prices, images, a product description, and shipping information.

### **Extension activity 2:** Persuasive analysis

Many reasons have been proposed to explain the collapse of the Classic Period Maya civilization. These include overpopulation, disease, exhaustion of natural resources, crop failures, warfare between cities, and the movement of other groups into the Maya area. Think about each reason and describe how it may have caused the collapse of the civilization. Create a persuasive argument for the reason you think was most likely to contribute to the final collapse. Use specific facts to support your opinion.

### **Extension activity 3:** Compare and Contrast.

Within the World Book article “Maya,” you will find pictures and text describing Mayan pyramids. Other civilizations also built pyramids, the most famous being Ancient Egypt. How are the Maya pyramids different from the pyramids of Ancient Egypt? Explain how they were built and used. You may use the World Book search tool to find the answers to this question. Since this activity is about Pyramids, it is recommended you start by searching the key words “Pyramid.”

### **Read more about the Maya in World Book’s eBook collection:**

*The Maya*. Chicago: World Book, 2013. Early Peoples. *World eBook*. Web. 06 Nov. 2015.

< <http://www.worldbookonline.com/wb/ebooks/mall/instt/catalog/urn:ISBN:978-0-7166-2338-0/detail.do>>.



# Teacher Page

## Answers:

1. These countries are: **Belize; Guatemala; Honduras;** and **El Salvador.**
2. A Maya manuscript lists more than **160** gods that were worshipped by the Maya.
3. The Maya pyramids were used for religious ceremonies and festivals, as well as tombs for rulers and other important persons.

*Additional information:* The Maya built tall pyramids of limestone with small temples on top. Priests climbed the stairs of the pyramids and performed ceremonies in the temples. Major religious festivals, such as those for the Maya New Year and for each of the Maya months, took place in the cities. Maya rulers and other important persons were buried in their finest garments within the pyramids, under the temples.

4. *Common citizens* were painted red and then were wrapped in straw mats with a few of their personal belongings. They were buried under the floor of the houses where they had lived. *Maya rulers* and other important persons were buried in their finest garments within the pyramids, under the temples. Servants were killed and buried with them, along with jewelry and utensils, for use in the next world.
5. Each Maya city governed its surrounding area, and some large cities each controlled one or more smaller cities. A city ruler would usually be succeeded by his younger brother or by his son.

*Additional information:* In late Maya times, the governments of such cities as Chichén Itzá and Mayapán controlled large parts of the Maya population.

6. Large stone monuments called **Stelae** were used to record important dates and to take note of great events in the lives of Maya rulers and the rulers' families.
7. In Maya mathematics, the number one was represented by a **dot** while a **bar** represented the number five.
8. **A.** One calendar was a sacred almanac of 260 days. Each day was named with one of 20 day names and a number from 1 to 13. Each of the 20 day names had a god or goddess associated with it.  
**B.** Another calendar used 365 days, based on the orbit of the earth around the sun. These days were divided into 18 months of 20 days each, plus 5 days at the end of the year.
9. These are the **Pre Classic** Period; the **Classic** Period; and the **Post Classic** Period.

10. This culture is called the **Olmec.**

11. Today, many people of Mexico and Central America speak one of more than 20 languages and dialects that developed from the ancient Maya language. Many descendants of the Maya farm as did their ancestors and carry on some of the traditional religious customs.

## See It!

12. Answers will vary. Students should be aware that the Maya used *hieroglyphic* (picture symbols) to represent ideas or words.

*Additional information:* These symbols represented combinations of sounds or entire ideas and formed a kind of hieroglyphic writing. Maya hieroglyphs consisted of a combination of ideograms that represented entire ideas or words and phonetic hieroglyphs that represented syllables.

13. Answers will vary. Maya artists decorated walls with brightly colored murals that featured lifelike figures taking part in battles and festivals. This Mayan mural depicts a scene at the royal court at Bonampak, where the King, *center*, is presented with prisoners captured in battle. Defeated prisoners surround him. Other members of the King's court can be seen wearing leopard skins that indicate their high rank.

## Timeline:

**B:** 1000 B.C.

**I:** 800 B.C.

**G:** 600-400 B.C.

**H:** 250 A.D.

**A:** 700 A.D.

**E:** 800 A.D.

**F:** 900 A.D.

**J:** 1200 A.D.

**C:** 1440 A.D.

**D:** 1697 A.D.

## What's the Word?

### Across

2. Chichén **Itza** is the name of the city that controlled large parts of the Maya population before 1200A.D.
4. A strip of cloth Maya men tied around their hips and passed between their legs: **Loincloth**.
5. The name of a Maya rain God: **Chac**.
6. This is the name of an alcoholic drink the Maya made from corn: **Balache**.
7. The Maya hunted these armored animals: **Armadillos**.
8. Around 1200 A.D., this city became the chief Mayan city: **Mayapan**.

### Down

1. The large stone monuments the Maya used to record events: **Stelae**.
3. This is the name of the Maya Sun God: **Kinich Ahau**.
9. The feathers of this bird were an important Maya trade item: **Quetzal**.



## Word Search!

1. A tropical fruit shaped like a pear, with a dark-green skin and a very large seed. Its yellow-green pulp has a nutty flavor and is used in salads and soups. (**Avocado**)
2. A small, kidney-shaped nut which is good to eat. (**Cashew**).
3. A hot-tasting seed pod of a tropical plant often used for sauces and salsa. (**Chili pepper**)
4. A very popular food made by roasting and grinding cacao seeds. (**Chocolate**)
5. A vegetable with large, fleshy edible roots, usually dark yellow to orange. (**Sweet potato**)
6. A food made of corn meal stuffed with meat. (**Tamale**)
7. A thin, round flatbread made from corn meal. (**Tortilla**)
8. A tropical tree or shrub with a sweet yellow or red, round or pear-shaped fruit (**Guava**).

A	P	W	K	L	Z	W	N	<b>S</b>	B	F
Q	R	O	M	P	X	R	S	<b>W</b>	E	C
<b>A</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>O</b>	B	<b>E</b>	D	X
<b>C</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>E</b>	P	W
B	R	F	W	M	C	A	F	<b>T</b>	L	O
<b>C</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>R</b>
<b>G</b>	B	V	<b>A</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>T</b>
<b>U</b>	S	W	R	<b>A</b>	P	W	X	<b>T</b>	S	A
<b>A</b>	P	I	<b>M</b>	O	Z	B	L	<b>A</b>	M	U
<b>V</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>W</b>	K	<b>T</b>	O	R
<b>A</b>	<b>T</b>	N	O	E	W	S	L	<b>O</b>	P	F

### Extension activity 1: Maya Trading Site

Answers may vary. The people of the Maya lowlands exported many items, including handicrafts, forest and sea products, and jaguar pelts. They imported jade, *obsidian* (volcanic glass), and the feathers of a bird called the *quetzal* from Maya in the highlands of Guatemala. The Maya of Yucatán sent salt and finely decorated cottons to Honduras. In return, they received cacao beans, which they used in making chocolate.

Students may provide a variety of answers to explain what products were used for. Chocolate was a highly prized for making a beverage. Obsidian was used for sharp tools, such as knives and weapons (the Maya used no metal tools). Jade and Quetzal feathers were highly prized for jewelry and body adornment. Cotton was used for cloth and clothing. Jaguar pelts were used to adorn the elites. Salt was a valuable resource for food in the hot climate.

## **Extension activity 2:** Persuasive analysis

Answers may vary. Scholars are still trying to discover the reasons for the collapse of Classic Maya society in the lowlands. Some experts point to a combination of such factors as overpopulation, disease, exhaustion of natural resources, crop failures, warfare between cities, and the movement of other groups into the Maya area.

Students may choose any of these factors and explain why. Climate change in the form of long lasting drought is a leading theory, but there is much evidence for warfare and invasion too.

## **Extension activity 3:** Compare and Contrast.

1. Answers may vary. The Pyramids of Egypt were built much early in history compared to the Maya pyramids (3,000 B.C. compared to 600 A.D.). The Egypt pyramids are typically very large and were used primarily as tombs for rulers. The Maya pyramids also served as burial places for rulers, but religious ceremonies were the primary function. These ceremonies were frequent and conducted by priests.

Egyptian pyramids were built mainly of limestone, as were the Maya pyramids. The flat surface of the Egypt pyramids contrasts the Maya pyramids which had a staircase on one or more sides. The Egypt pyramids are built away from city and towns, while most large cities in Maya culture had a central pyramid/temple.

Students may also indicate the Egypt pyramids took thousands of workers many years to construct. The Maya pyramids were likely not such large projects (although they are impressive!)

## **Read more about the Maya in World Book's eBook collection:**

*The Maya*. Chicago: World Book, 2013. Early Peoples. *World eBook*. Web. 06 Nov. 2015.

< <http://www.worldbookonline.com/wb/ebooks/mall/instt/catalog/urn:ISBN:978-0-7166-2338-0/detail.do>>.