

Ancient Maya

The Maya Empire, centred in the tropical lowlands of what is now Guatemala, reached the peak of its power and influence around the sixth century A.D. The Maya excelled at agriculture, pottery, hieroglyph writing, calendar-making and mathematics, and left behind an astonishing amount of impressive architecture and symbolic artwork.

Astronomy

While the Maya lacked the advanced technology with which to make their calculations, they were great observers, especially when it came to making observations about the skies above. Indeed, the Maya were keen astronomers who used their inventive writing and maths systems to record and interpret every aspect of the sky.

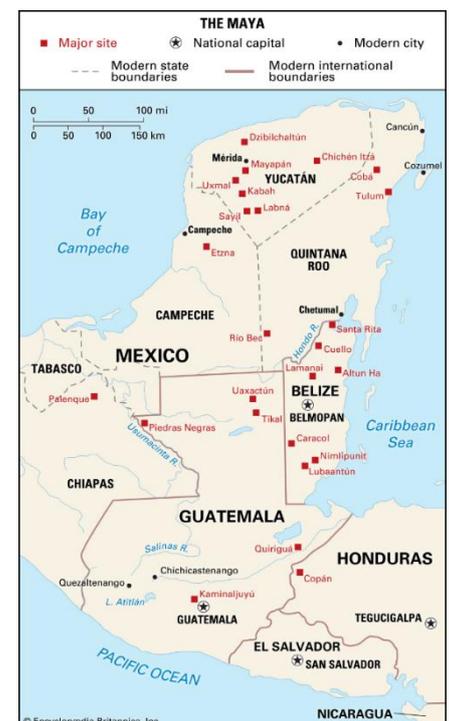
The Calendar

One of the most amazing things to come from the astronomical observations of the Maya was their calendar system. Using their knowledge of astronomy and mathematics, the ancient Maya developed one of the most accurate calendar systems in human history. The Maya developed calendars to keep track of celestial movements, as well as the passage of time.

Sometimes, you hear people refer to the “Maya calendar,” but the Maya actually had three calendars that worked together like gears spinning in a great machine. The three calendars used by the Maya include their sacred calendar, known as the Tzolkin, their civil calendar known as the Haab, and their Long Count Calendar.

Architecture

As unique and spectacular as any Greek or Roman architecture, Maya architecture spans many thousands of years; yet, often the most dramatic and easily recognizable as Maya are the fantastic stepped pyramids from the Terminal Pre-classic period and beyond. These pyramids relied on intricate carved stone in order to create a stair-step design. Each pyramid was dedicated to a deity whose shrine sat at its peak. During this "height" of Maya culture, the centres of their religious, commercial and bureaucratic power grew into incredible cities, including Chichen Itza, Tikal, and Uxmal. Through observation of the numerous consistent elements and stylistic distinctions, remnants of Maya architecture have become an important key to understanding the evolution of their ancient civilization.



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Questions

1. What is the name of the present-day country where the Maya Empire once thrived?

2. How many Maya calendars were there? (Circle the answer)

1 / 3 / 5

3. What purpose did the calendar provide the ancient civilization?

4. List four things the Mayan civilization were famous for.

5. The Maya were keen astronomers who used their inventive writing and maths systems to record and interpret every aspect of the sky.

True / False

6. Other than pyramids, what does Maya culture share in common with Ancient Egypt?

7. Maya architecture featured pyramids. True / False