

Year 5 Knowledge
Organiser -
Marvellous Maya



How did the Maya civilisation compare to the Anglo- Saxons?

Maya Houses- The Maya lived in houses called Nah. Initially, they were wooden, rectangular structures covered with wattle and daub with a thatched roof made of palm leaves. The Maya partitioned their houses into separate sleeping, eating and living areas and had an area outside to keep animals. Significant people like kings lived in palaces built out of limestone.

Settling in the Rain-forest- The 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 adept hunters and developing crops that could grow successfully in the conditions, such as cocoa and maize.

Maya Cities- Maya cities such as Tikal thrived in the Classic period. The cities had a grand plaza (main street) on which the most important buildings were found (such as temples, observatory towers, ball courts and palaces). 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).

Key vocabulary

Abandon- To leave something and not return

City-state- A large, independent city running the surrounding area.

Classic period- A period of time in the Maya civilisation from AD 250 to 900.

Creation story- A story which explains how the world was made, from a particular point of view.

Decline- When something becomes less important, prominent or reduces in quality.

Deforestation- When forests in a large area are cut down.

Drought- A prolonged period of no rain, leading to water shortages.

Hieroglyphics- Maya symbols which represented words or letters.

Pyramid- Pyramid-shaped buildings which functioned as temples.

Slash and burn- Cutting and burning down trees and plants to clear land.

Tropical rainforest- Dense forest that grows in hot, wet areas between the Tropics.

