



**CONONLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
Inspiring and Challenging Our Children

# Maya Civilisation

## Key Stage 2

**Key:**

For this each History topic, the key knowledge taught to both Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 & 4) and Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 &6) is written in **black** type.

Additional key knowledge taught to Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 & 6) is written in **red** type.

## History: Curriculum Intent—Key Knowledge

### Background for Teachers

The Maya Empire, based in what is now Guatemala, reached the peak of its power 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

|   |  |
|---|--|
| All dates below are approximate                   | All dates below are approximate  |
| <b>The Pre-classic period (1800 BC to 250 AD)</b> | Great growth for the Maya. Small villages evolved into cities. Hierarchy began to emerge (King with absolute power; nobles, priests, astronomers; merchants & artisans; peasants; slaves)  |
| <b>Classic Period (250 - 1000 AD)</b>             | Maya culture flourished. City states began to take over smaller neighbouring cities. Goods such as chocolate and stone are traded with neighbouring city states. Towards the end of the Classic Period, Maya centres become less important |
| <b>Post Classic Maya (1000 AD onwards)</b>        | City of Chichen Itza became very powerful with strong economy and military powers. Other Mayan cities continued to decline.  |
| <b>Spanish Arrive (1500s)</b>                     | Ships with Spanish explorers arrive. Brought diseases with them which killed many Maya.  |
| <b>Hernan Cortes (1519)</b>                       | A Spanish explorer conquered the Maya and began to remove Maya culture.  |

#### Key Themes and terms which run through our history curriculum

**Archeology / archeologist** – the study of history by digging in different historic sites and studying what is found/ someone who digs up the remains of old societies

**City State** – a city which has its own laws, like a very small independent country.

**Civilisation** – a human society with its own social organisation and culture.

**Conquer, conquest** – to gain something by force, often used to describe an army overpowering another country.

A **conquistador** is a person who sets out to conquer new territory. Usually refers to Spanish and Portuguese soldiers who conquered

**Culture** – shared behaviour such as diet, language, clothing, tools, music, arts, customs, beliefs, and religion, which are shared by a group of people or **society**

**Decline** – a decrease in power, wealth, size and importance

**Exploration** – to travel in order to find things / make discoveries

**Hierarchy** - the different ranks, or power structures, in a society or organisation.

**Invade, invasion** - to enter as an enemy, by force, in order to conquer or plunder (stealing goods or money).

**Society** – people living together in organised communities

**Trade** - is the activity of buying, selling, or exchanging goods or services between people, businesses, or countries.

#### Key Places

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Mesoamerica</b>               | The Maya lived in Mesoamerica which is now made up by the following countries- Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Belize, El Salvador, 9 states in Mexico.                             |
| <b>Tikal</b>                     | Tikal One of the largest Maya city-states. At one time more than 100,000 people lived there.  |
| <b>El Castillo, Chichen Itza</b> | Ancient Maya temple still standing today- each of the four sides of the pyramid has 91 steps. With the step on the top platform, that makes a total of 365 steps. Equal to the number of days in a year |

#### Key People

**Farmers** – irrigated fields and provided food for the city

**Kings** –Known as divine kings—they were the most important people in Mayan society. The more important you were the bigger the headdress.

**Pakal the Great** - King of Palenque for 68 years, longer than any other ruler in the Ancient Maya world!

**Priests**– The Ancient Maya believed in rituals. They believed that the priests were in touch with the spirit world of the Gods.

## Curriculum Intent: Key Lines of Enquiry

| Key line of enquiry 1:  | Key line of enquiry 2:  | Key line of enquiry 3:   |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Who were the Maya?</b><br/>We will learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How we know about the Ancient Maya Civilisation – sources / archeology etc</li> <li>• Where the Maya lived, including geographical features such as climate and terrain (In greater depth fro Year 5 &amp; 6)</li> <li>• How they lived in city states, each ruled by a powerful king, rather than part of a single country or empire</li> <li>• How they were skilled architects. The Maya built pyramids, temples, palaces, walls, residences and more.</li> </ul> | <p><b>What was everyday life like for the Maya?</b><br/>We will learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family roles, jobs and diet</li> <li>• Which gods were worshipped by the Maya</li> <li>• Compare with gods from other pagan religions explaining possible links etc.</li> <li>• The Maya creation story</li> <li>• Why the Maya sacrificed animals and humans</li> <li>• What Maya religion tell us about what was important in their society and culture.</li> <li>• What games were played by the Maya</li> <li>• How life was different for rich and poor, men and women at the height of Maya civilisation</li> <li>• Hierarchy of Maya society</li> <li>• Pakal the Great</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Why did the Mayan Empire grow to be so powerful?</b><br/>We will learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why farming was so important</li> <li>• Why the Maya studied the weather and the stars</li> <li>• Different types of Mayan farming</li> <li>• Trade</li> <li>• Comparison farming in Ancient Egypt</li> </ul>   |
| Key Vocabulary  | Key Vocabulary  | Key Vocabulary   |
| <p><b>Archeologist</b> – Someone who digs up the remains of old societies</p> <p><b>Architecture</b> –the design of buildings. Maya architecture is important, as it is one of the few aspects of Maya life that is still available for study.</p> <p><b>Civilisation</b> - a human society with its own social organisation and culture</p>  | <p><b>Creation myth</b> – A story which explains the beginning of the world</p> <p><b>Culture</b> –shared behaviour such as diet, language, clothing, tools, music, arts, customs, beliefs, and religion, which are shared by a group of people or society</p> <p><b>Gods</b> - The Maya had many gods. Some of the key ones were: <b>Itzamna</b>—a creation god and sun god and the creator of writing; <b>Chac</b> the god of rain and storms; <b>Chel</b> was the wife of Itzamna and the god of childbirth and the moon.</p> <p><b>Hierarchy</b>- the different ranks, or power structures, in a society or organisation</p> <p><b>Pok-ta-pot</b> – Mayan sport used to settle disagreements</p> <p><b>Sacrifice</b> – An offering to keep the Gods happy</p> <p><b>Society</b> – people living together in organised communities</p> | <p><b>Astronomy</b> – the study of sun, moon, planets, stars, galaxies, and all other matter in the universe</p> <p><b>Raised farming</b> – method of farming used by Maya in very wet areas by creating ‘small islands’ of soil for planting.</p> <p><b>Slash and Burn</b> – where jungle areas are chopped down and burnt, then the area is used for planting crops.</p> <p><b>Terrace farming</b> – method of farming used in hilly areas. Maya used walls to make small, flat fields on top of each other, in steps or terraces.</p> |

## Curriculum Intent: Key Lines of Enquiry

| Key line of enquiry 4:  | Key Line of Enquiry 5:   | Links to other History topics:  |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>How advanced was Mayan society?</b><br/>We will learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems of writing / hieroglyphs</li> <li>• Mathematics, Calendar, Astronomy</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Art -sculpture, carving, painting, ceramics</li> <li>• Architecture</li> <li>• Chocolate!</li> <li>• <b>Compare and contrast aspects of culture with with other ancient civilisations and also Anglo Saxon Britain (same time period)</b></li> </ul> | <p><b>What happened to the Maya?</b><br/>We will learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible reasons for the decline of the Maya Civilisation, including invasion, disease, famine, drought, migration</li> <li>• <b>Comparison with decline of other civilisations</b></li> <li>• Why Mayan cities (which had been deserted) stayed hidden for so long.</li> <li>• Maya people today.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Compare and contrast with other Ancient Civilisations such as Ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece.</b></li> <li>• <b>Compare and contrast with life in Anglo Saxon England ( same period)</b></li> </ul>                                       |
| Key Vocabulary  | Key Vocabulary   | Links to other subjects:  |
| <p><b>Base 20</b> – A maths system based on 20, not 10 like us<br/> <b>Codex</b> – The Maya book<br/> <b>Hieroglyphics</b> – A type of writing that used a combination of pictures and symbols<br/> <b>Stelae</b> – stones or wooden posts which have writing on them</p>   | <p><b>Conquer, conquest</b> – to gain something by force, often used to describe an army overpowering another country.</p> <p>A <b>conquistador</b> is a person who sets out to conquer new territory. Usually refers to Spanish and Portuguese soldiers who conquered</p> <p><b>Exploration</b> – to travel in order to find things / make discoveries.</p> <p><b>Invade, invasion-</b> to enter as an enemy, by force, in order to conquer or plunder (stealing goods or money).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art – sculpture, ceramics</li> <li>• Maths – Base 20, Calendar</li> <li>• Music – Maya musical instruments; song based on the topic</li> <li>• Science –space</li> <li>• Geography – countries, continents, oceans, rivers, geographical features, maps</li> </ul> |

