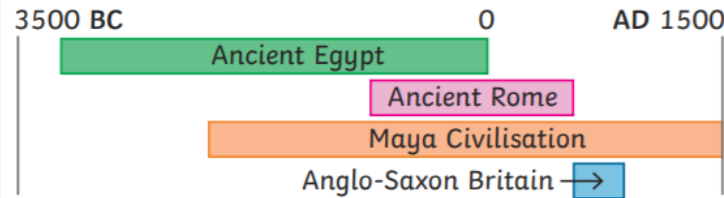


Year 6: The Maya

Key Vocabulary

astronomy	The study of the universe
cacao beans	Cacao trees sprout pods directly from their trunks. When they are ripe, the pods can be broken open to reveal the beans, which can then be dried, roasted and ground.
cenote	A natural pit used for water supplies
Chichen Itza	A ruined ancient Maya city
dynasty	A series of rulers or leaders who are all from the same family, or a period when a country is ruled by them
excavating	Digging to find things underground
Hieroglyphs	A picture or symbol representing a word, syllable or sound
hostile terrain	Land that is difficult for people, animals and plants to live in
maize	Another word for sweetcorn or corn on the cob. It can be made into a dough and baked into tortillas.
ritual	A ceremony, often religious, with set actions performed in a set order
sacrifice	The act of offering something precious



How did the empire grow?

- Learnt how to trade with others e.g. those in Mexico
- Learnt how to grow crops and irrigate soil using terraces
- Had lots of valuable materials to sell e.g. jade stones
- Knew how to clear the forest and live in the jungle



What was life like and how do we know?

Writing - The Maya writing system, used to write several different Maya languages, was made up of over 800 symbols called glyphs.

Numbers - The Maya developed a complex number and counting system that was advanced for their time. They were one of only two cultures in the world to develop the concept of zero.

Food - Maize was a very important crop that formed up to 80% of the Maya people's diets.

Religion - The Maya believed in and worshipped a number of different gods. They believed that the gods had a good side and a bad side.

Calendar - The Mayan calendar (Tzolkin) consisted of 260 days and 13 months.

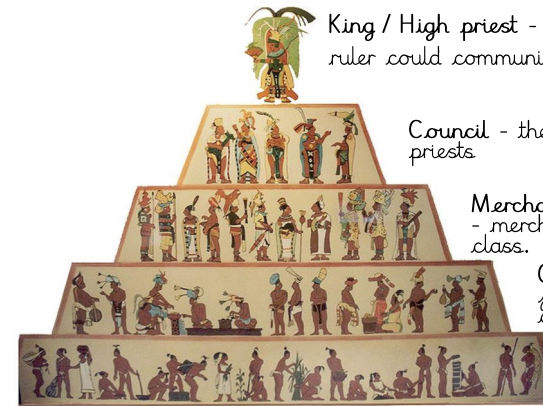
Primary sources come directly from the time of the event e.g. a photograph or an artefact.



Secondary sources are created after the event and are often created using primary sources e.g. a textbook.



How different was it for the rich and the poor?



King / High priest - People believed their ruler could communicate with the gods.

Council - the generals, scribes and priests

Merchants and warriors - merchants who were considered high class.

Commoners - Many were farmers who grew maize and beans.

Slaves

The men cultivated the land and the women made food. The commoners had to pay their ruler in cloth.



American explorer and travel writer, John Lloyd Stephens and British artist, Frederick Catherwood explored the Maya city of Copan in 1839. Drawings were produced of the artefacts and sites that they had found.

Why did the empire decline?

There are as many as 88 different theories as to why the Mayan empire declined. Some of the theories historians believe are:

- The Mayans exhausted the environment. The land could no longer provide for such a large population.
- Constant warfare among the competing states weakened the Mayans.
- There was a very long period of drought, so the crops failed and people starved.
- A Killer disease struck this part of Central America and wiped out massive numbers. The Maya never recovered their former glory after this.

Timeline

1100 BC Hunter gatherers settle along the Pacific coast.	1100 BC Settlements begin to appear.	700 BC Maya writing is developed	100 BC The first Maya Pyramids are built.	900 -1200 AD El Castillo is built.	250 AD Beginning of the Classic Period.	1000 AD Chichen Itza is the most powerful city.	1502 AD First contact with Europe.
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