

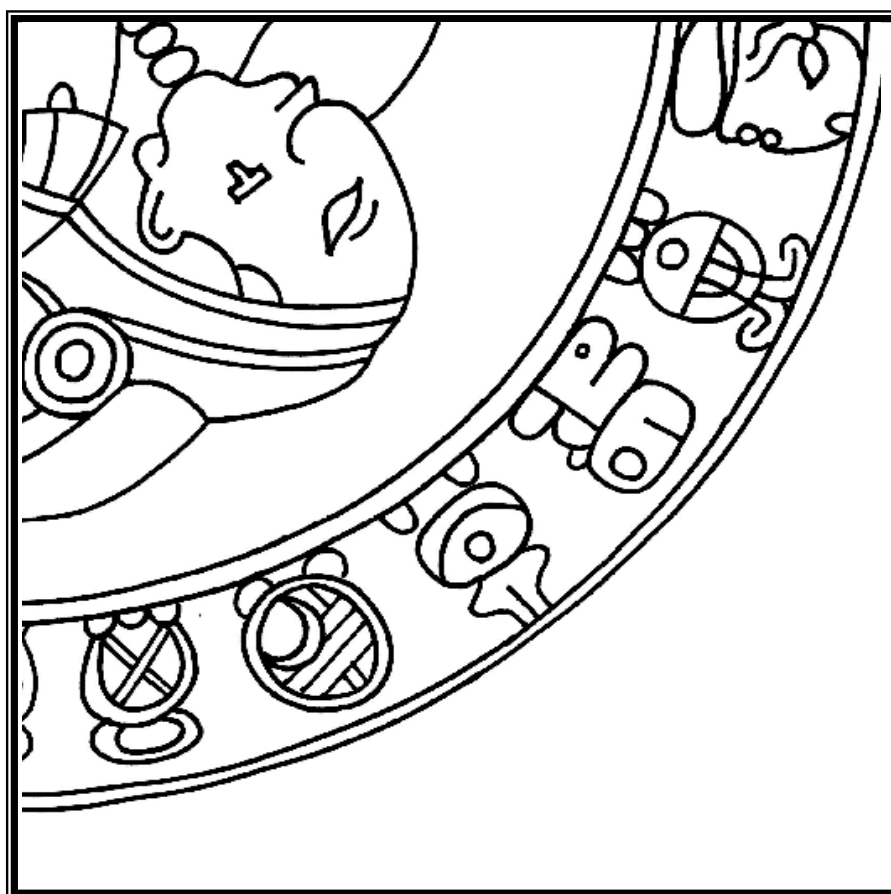


## Mayans

As the Learning Team are working from home and don't have access to our actual handling artefacts, we have created a series of learning posts/pages based on our schools Mayan loans box replicas. We don't have Mayan artefacts in our collection—the box was created to support teachers.

This pack is aimed at supporting children's learning at home.

Our information is short and easy to read - but remember this is about interesting you in the topic, it's not the whole history of the Mayans.



# Mayan Calendar

Mayan calendars are a set of 3 interlocking calendars; Tzolkin, Haab, Long Count calendar. When Mayans referred to a date in an inscription, they used all three calendars to write the date. Every 52 years the Tzolkin and Haab would sync together, this was called a calendar round.

The **Tzolkin** or sacred calendar was a 260 day period divided into 20 equal periods. Each day was represented by a day and a number. The numbers ran from 1 to 13 and there were 20 day names. When the cycle of 1 to 13 was complete it would start again, the 20 day names would continue. It took 260 days to return back to number 1 and day 1.

The **Haab** or Solar calendar has 365 days, so therefore can be most closely linked to the Georgian calendar we use today. However, the Mayans divided the year up into 18 months of 20 days each and then 5 isolated days that were seen to be unlucky, this time was known as the Wayeb. Mayans stayed at home during this period to avoid disaster. This was written as the day, represented by a number followed by the name of the month.

The **Long Count Calendar** provided the Mayans with the opportunity to keep track of longer periods of time. The Mayans marked the beginning of this calendar as August 11th, 3114 BC. In this calendar the dates are expressed by 5 digits. The five digits represent a kin (day 0-19), Uinal (month 0-17), Tun (Year 0-19), K'atun (20 years, 0-19), B'ak'tun (20 Katuns, 0-13). Each K'atun is approximately 400 years.



# Death and rebirth mask—triple mask

Mayan masks were made from a variety of materials, including wood, gold, shell and volcanic rock, they used masks for a variety of reasons; to adorn the faces of the dead, to be worn at important events, to be worn during battle, and to be hung in houses. The importance of the mask dictated how intricate the design was and how precious the material used.

This Mayan mask shows the different stages of life as part of a never ending cycle of human evolution through life and the afterlife as it was understood by the Mayans. The mask has three layered faces, each representing one particular stage of life. The inner face represents the beginning of life at birth. The middle face is the most important one, since it represents the adult stage when the person comes into his full potential and most of his life experiences happened. The outer or third face represents the end of earthly life. This sacred time was viewed by the Maya as the end of one cycle and the beginning of another one. Death was followed by lavish preparations for the next life.



## Painted bowl—ceramics

Mayan ceramics were vessels of different shapes, colours, sizes and had a variety of purposes. They were made from 2 types of material, limestone or volcanic ash. Bowls and pots were made using the coil or slab method. This Mayan painted bowl shows an example of the coil method. Ceramics used by individuals of higher standing in society, were more elaborate with detailed paintings on the outside. The vessels the elite had used for drinking cocoa, were equally as elaborate and were often buried with them in their tombs. Mayan ceramics were very important during the classic period, they were thought to be given as gifts to important visitors and used during large feasts. The ceramics used by the general public, such as the example bowl, were made in large quantities and generally only had one or two colours decorating it.





# Worry doll

Worry Dolls are small hand—made dolls, that originated from Guatemala and Mexico. They are generally made from wire, wool and leftover textiles. They are dressed to represent traditional Mayan style and they are up to 2 inches tall. The legend of the worry doll is said to originate from a story of a princess, who received a gift from the sun god, which allowed her to solve any problems. Worry dolls are now given to children, they will tell their worries to the doll. The worry doll is then placed under the child's pillow and when they wake the next morning, the worry doll will have taken their worries away.



# Chacmool

The oldest Chacmool that have been found date back to 800-900 AD. The Chacmool is a life size sculpture, of a reclining figure, with its head facing 90 degrees from the front, the figure is supporting itself on its elbows, while holding a bowl or disk on its stomach. These details can vary between different chacmools, with the head facing in different directions and the figure adorning different clothing and features. Chacmools are not to be believed to have been worshipped, as they were never found inside temples or tombs, there are several ideas of their purpose. Importance seemed to have place on the bowl, believing it was used to hold sacrificial offerings, such as pulque, tamales, tortillas, tobacco, turkeys, feathers and incense.



# Stone metate

The metate is a grinding or milling stone, made up of 1 large stone with 3 legs which sits on the ground and another smaller stone used to rub against the larger one and grind or mill food such as maize and cocoa beans. Matates are one of the oldest known domestic tools in the Americas. The 3 small legs support the stone at the correct angle to the ground at an incline. Metates from the Mayan period were made of porous volcanic stone.



# Pakal Head

Mayan king, Pakal the great, was born in the year 603 AD. He was king of the Maya Kingdom of Palenque, ascending the throne at the age of 12 and is said to have reined for 67 years until his death at the age of 80. The name “Pakal” means shield in Mayan. Following his death Pakal the great was worshipped as a god and is said to still communicate with his descendants. The lid to Pakal’s tomb is the most photographed and written about stonework of its kind.





# Mayan Maize god

Maize was the central component of the diet of the ancient Maya and was prominent in Maya mythology and ideology. Maize was typically ground up on a metate and prepared in a number of different ways. Today maize still forms a large part of the central American diet, such as tortillas. The Maize god was decapitated at harvest time, but reborn again at the beginning of the growing season. Myths about the death and rebirth of gods helped Mayans understanding the cycle of seasons and why maize returned. Mayans worshipped the Maize god believing that their ancestors were made from maize dough.



## 10 Mayan Gods

- **Itzamna** is ruler of heavens and of day and night
- **Chac**, the rain god
- **Kinich Ahau** (also known by **Ah Xoc Kin**, who was associated with the writings and poetry), the sun god
- The maize god, who was associated with **Yumil Kaxob** the god of flora
- **Yum Cimil** (Ah Puch) was the death god, or god of the underworld
- **Ixtab**, the suicide goddess
- **Kukulcan**, the wind god.



# Cocoa Beans

Cocoa beans were believed to have first been discovered by Mayans around 900 AD. The Mayans created a liquid, using the cocoa beans, that they considered to be 'food of the gods'. This liquid was named 'xocolatl' (SHOW—CO—LA—TIL) it is believed that the modern word chocolate, originated from this term, translated xocolatl means bitter water. The liquid was made by drying the cocoa beans then crushing them before combining them with water and spices, as there was no sugar in central America at this time, the spices would have been used to try and disguise the bitter flavour of the cocoa beans, chilli was a popular choice. Cocoa beans were so important to the Mayans, that images of them were painted on the walls of temples and on Mayan artefacts, cocoa beans and vessels associated with its consumption, were also placed within Mayan tombs, Cocoa was also consumed during special ceremonies, such as marriages and cocoa could be enjoyed by everyone regardless of social status.



# Cocoa Pods

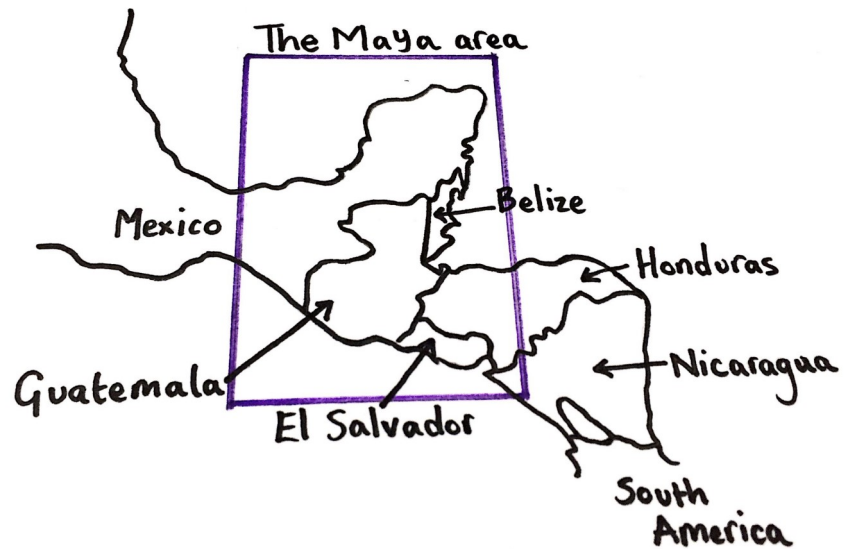
The cocoa pod is the fruit of the cocoa tree, (*Theobroma cacao*). The Cocoa tree is native to the Americas, originating in central America and Mexico, wild cocoa still grows there, but is not as wide spread. Cocoa pods vary greatly in colour, shape and size, according to their variety, this cocoa pod is a Criollo, a rare variety that is considered a delicacy. Cocoa pods have a rough leathery skin, that can measure approximately 2-3cm thick. The pod houses between 30 and 50 seeds (cocoa beans), which are fairly soft, until they are dried, these are protected by a sweet pulp, which was believed to be the first element of the cocoa pod consumed by humans.



# Mayan History

## OVERVIEW

- The Mayan civilisation was a Mesoamerican society, this is a term used to describe Mexico and central America before the Spanish conquest of the 16th century.
- The Mayan civilisation was very concentrated, unlike other Mesoamerican people. This helped Maya remain secure from invasion.
- The Maya Empire reached the peak of its power and influence around the sixth century A.D. (AD 501-600). Although Maya was not a unified empire, and was never ruled by one person, it was a series of powerful City states they sometimes allied but sometimes fought against each other.
- A more accurate definition of Maya, would be a collection of city-states, that shared some ritual and ceremonial practices, some architecture and some cultural objects.
- The Maya civilisation is divided into distinct eras; Preclassic, Late Preclassic, Early Classic, Late classic and Post classic.
- The Mayan people were accomplished at Pottery, hieroglyph writing (pictures that represent words), calendar– making and mathematics.
- The Mayans were also very accomplished architects and builders and left behind impressive temples such as El Castillo (Temple of Kukulcan) in Chichen itza.
- Most Maya cities were abandoned by A.D. 900, however no one is sure what was the cause of the collapse of Maya.



## The Mayan Era's

### **Pre classic period**

The characteristics associated with Mayan civilisation, can be evidenced from around 1800 BC, by 1000 BC the Mayan people had spread and settled into the Mayan region of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras. The people lived in small villages and lived a basic life dedicating themselves to farming, to support their families and local communities. Palenque, Tikal and Copan, were the major Mayan cities established within this period, as they began to prosper basic trade was established.

### **Late Pre-classic Period**

The late classic period lasted from 300 BC to 300 AD, during this time great temples were constructed, long distance trade flourished, particularly for luxury items such as Jade and Obsidian (volcanic glass). Tombs from this era were more elaborate containing offerings and treasures.

## Early Classic Period

This period is considered to have begun when Mayan people began carving ornate (AD 300—600), beautiful statues of leaders and rulers. These statues were dated using the Mayan long date calendar. The earliest example of this was the statue of Tikal dated AD 292 and the latest is of Tonina, dated AD 909. During this time the Mayans continued to develop more intellectual pursuits such as astronomy, mathematics and architecture. Evidence of pottery and architecture done in the Teotihuacan style shows the influence the city of Teotihuacan had over the Mayan city states.

## Late Classic period

The Mayan civilisation between AD 600 to 900 marks the high point of Mayan Culture. There were approximately 80 city states, all dominating regions within the Mayan area. These city states, warred, allied and traded with one another. These cities were ruled by the elite class and priests, who claimed they were descendants of the Sun, moon and stars. The cities were over populated.

## Maya today

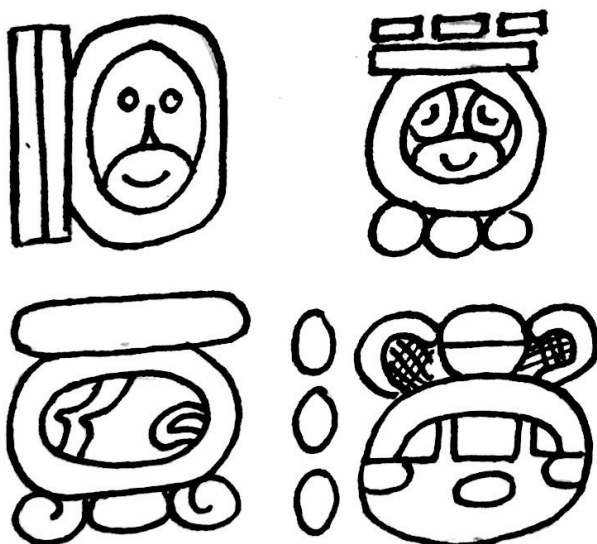
Descendants of Maya still live in the same region of central America and Mexico. They continue to adhere to the traditions, including language, clothing and religion. The natives have embraced the interest in their heritage, by selling handicrafts and promoting tourism to their regions. There was particular interest in Maya in 2012, This is when the Mayan long count calendar was due to reset and speculation grew about the potential for this to be the end of the world.

## Writing, language and Calendars

### Writing

The Mayans used writing called hieroglyphics and similarities can be seen with Egyptian Hieroglyphs, but it is actually quite different. They used symbols to represent words, sounds or objects and by arranged these into groups of symbols they were able to make sentences and tell stories. There are over 800 hieroglyphs in the Mayan language. Only the rich learned to read and write and they used long sheets of paper made of bark or leather, by concertinaing the paper, they were able to make books, these books were called codex or codices. There are over 10,000 known inscriptions on buildings, monuments, pottery and codices. These inscriptions provide the basis for the current understanding of pre-Columbian history. It wasn't until the 1950's that it was proved to be a language.

Mayan Hieroglyphs example



Mayan numbers

0	1	2	3	4
	•	••	•••	••••
5	6	7	8	9
		••	•••	••••
10	11	12	13	14
		••	•••	••••
15	16	17	18	19
		••	•••	••••



# Mayan History continued

## Language

Currently within the countries of the Mayan region, Spanish is the official language. However, 6 million indigenous Mayan people still speak up to 30 different Mayan languages. Mayan dialects originated from a singular language, and then evolved within each city state. There were two variants of Mayan languages, reflected within the written hieroglyphs.

## Calendars

Mayan calendars are a set of 3 interlocking calendars; Tzolkin, Haab, Long Count calendar. When Mayans referred to a date in an inscription, they used all three calendars to write the date. Every 52 years the Tzolkin and Haab would sync together, this was called a calendar round.

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On December 20th December 2012 the Mayan long count calendar read 12.19.17.19.19 so the next day on December 21st 2012 the calendar would read 13.0.0.0.0. this sparked the idea that the Mayans were possibly predicting the end of the world. However, the calendar just started again, returning to 0.0.0.0.1.

## Mayan Clothing

The Mayan's wove their own fabrics using textiles such as hemp and cotton. They dyed the fabrics with bright colours and wove them into brilliant designs and patterns, including geometric, floral and animal. The garments were embellished with colourful embroidery. Mayan clothes were designed to drape rather than be tight fitting, the poor took a lot of pride in their clothing, as personal grooming was not a priority within their busy lives. Although style between the rich and poor was very similar, the poor looked after their clothes a lot better, and special clothes worn to celebrations, were carefully put away, when they returned home.

Women wore loose blouses and long skirts, with bright colourful sashes or belts, and a warm shawl or cloak in the winter. Men wore loin clothes with a wrap around skirt or kilt over the top. They may have carried a woven cloth. Some men also wore colourful cloth turbans on their heads and during the winter, they would wear a poncho to keep warm. The Mayans wore sandals made of deer skin and decorated with pom poms and other animal hide.

Jewellery was really popular amongst Mayans, they wore earrings, nose rings, lip rings, necklaces, pins and more. The rich had jewellery made of precious metals and gems, where as the poor made their jewellery from bones sticks and painted clay. Nobles wore hats, the hat had to be as high as the noble could handle, some were taller than the person! Only nobles could feathers, they were added to their hats and garments, if a commoner wore a hat they could be killed.

## **Daily life**

Maya people had a class society, with nobles and priests at the top, craftsmen, traders and warriors were in the middle and the bottom was farmers and slaves. The Mayans used people from other tribes as slaves. Artefacts that have been dug up have helped archaeologists piece together Mayan life;

## **Education**

Special priests had the job of teaching the children of the nobles, subjects that were taught included, math, science, astronomy, medicine, writing and other subjects. Commoners did not have formal schooling, as most children were expected to help their parents farm the land, by the age of 5 children were given daily duties, so they could learn their role, they would eventually fulfil. If the parent had a specialist job, they would learn that skill. Boys learned their fathers trade and girls, their mothers, children were considered fully trained and adult by the age of 15. It was almost impossible to change roles, social structure was inherited with little or no flexibility.

## **Food**

The Mayans hunted for meat, specifically poultry and birds eggs, they also hunted small deers, they also ate monkey! They also grew a lot of food, including sweet potatoes, corn beans, chillies and squash, these are still prominent within the diet of people living in central America. Corn was known as maize by the Mayans and was the most important part of their diet, The used the maize to make corn flour this was used to make traditional breads such as tortillas. Women cooked all the food as well as taking care of the kitchen garden and cattle.

## **Houses**

Mayan houses were made up of several small buildings, centred around a courtyard, this did not change between the rich and the poor, many generations lived within one compound. The Mayans had furniture and used platforms for beds. There is evidence that they used curtains to separate living spaces from sleeping areas. It was very important for families to have a boy, as only boys could inherit land and belongings.

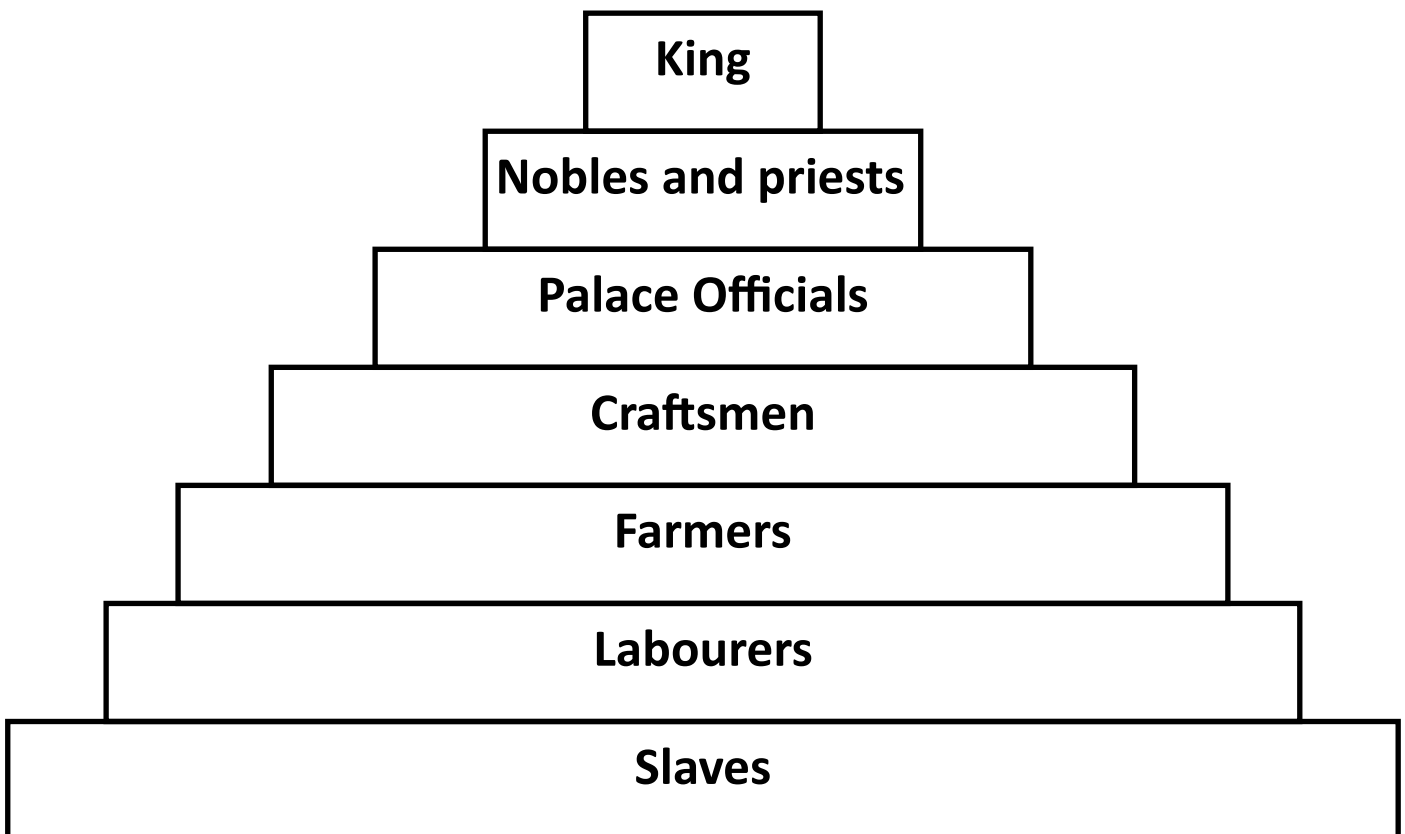
## **Children**

Children had very busy lives and did not have much time to play, very little evidence of toys has been found, instead it is believed children spent their day either in prayer or working with their parents , preparing themselves for future life. Children became adults at 15 and took part in a ceremony to celebrate this. This also signified that they were ready for marriage , which would have been arranged quickly after this point, most people were married by the age of 20.

# Mayan Society

Mayan society was structured a bit like a pyramid. The higher up the pyramid you were, the more important you were:

- 1) **King:** The king was at the very top of the pyramid and was the most important person in the city state. Mayans believed that kings were chosen by the gods. This meant that a king's orders and wishes had to be obeyed.
- 2) **Nobles and Priests:** These were very important people who were educated. They were the scribes and astrologers of society. They lived in grand houses.
- 3) **Palace Officials:** These were also very important people. They were in charge of the day-to-day running of the city.
- 4) **Craftsmen:** Craftsmen included anyone who had a skilled job, such as a stonemason, tailor or wood-carver.
- 5) **Farmers:** Most ordinary people in Mayan society were farmers. They usually lived in small settlements and lived simple lives.
- 6) **Labourers:** Labourers did the hard manual labour that was needed to build temples and other buildings. Labourers were paid a very low wage.
- 7) **Slaves:** Slaves were at the very bottom of the social pyramid. They also had to do hard labour, and anything else they were told to do, but they didn't get paid for their work. They were given food and shelter by their masters.





## Online Resources

Convert any date from our Georgian calendar to a either the Tzolk'in Calendar, The Haab calendar or the Long count calendar.

- <https://maya.nmai.si.edu/calendar/maya-calendar-converter>

Useful, fun and slightly disturbing facts about the Mayans

- <http://mayas.mrdonn.org/comingofage.html>

Inside a Mayan temple

- <https://www.livescience.com/14768-mayan-tomb-images.html>

General information about Mayan temples

- <https://www.livescience.com/2321-ancient-mayans-temples.html>

General facts about the Mayans

- <https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/history/mayans/>

Website, with games, facts, and resources.

- <http://www.mayankids.com/>

What happened to the Mayans?

- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/cultures/maya\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/cultures/maya_01.shtml)

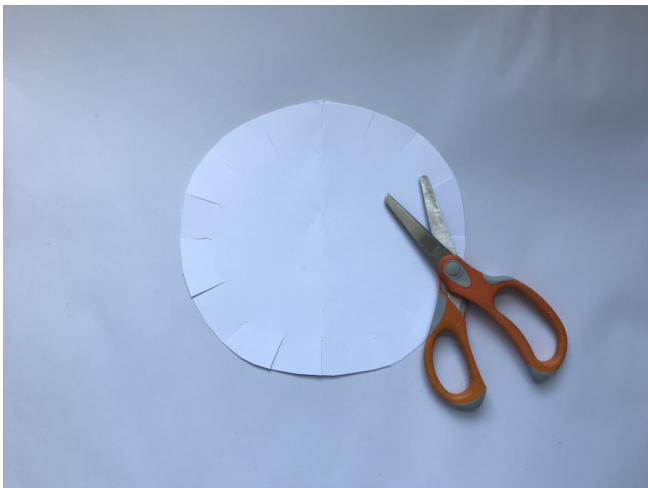
An overview with photos of Mayan ruins

- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/central-america/galleries/Central-Americas-best-Mayan-temples/>

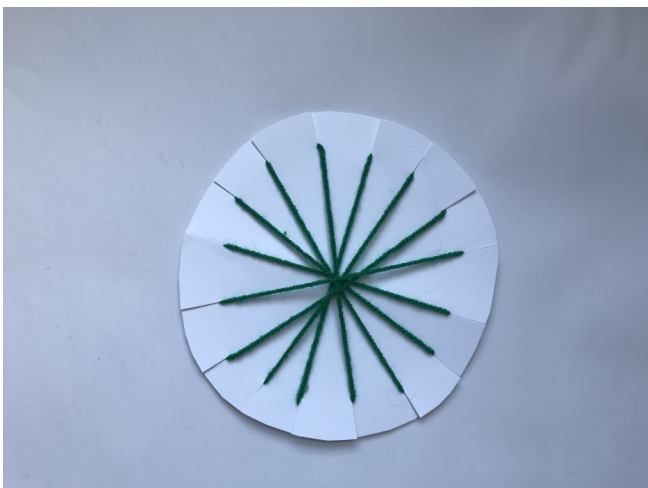
# Make your own Mayan Weaving



**Step 1.** Gather your materials, you will need, a circle of card, scissors, some wool or other lengths of fabric.

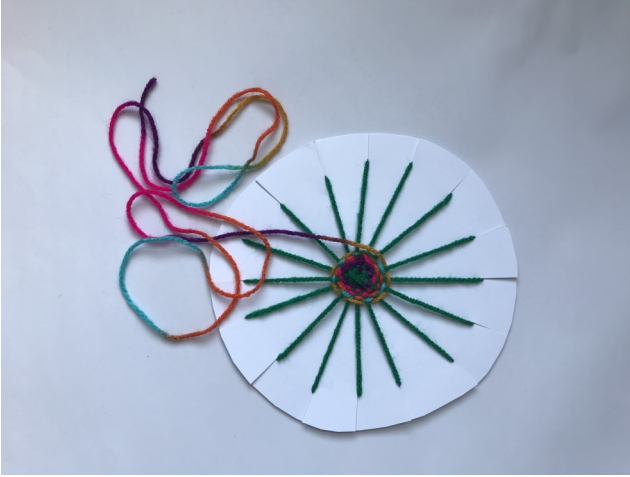


**Step 2.** Use the scissors to make small cuts around your circle of card, see picture.



**Step 3.** Use some wool to wrap around the circle, so that it creates a star pattern, see picture.

# Make your own Mayan Weaving



**Step 4.** Cut a length of wool or fabric and tie this to one of the strands on the card. Then begin weaving the wool, under and over.



**Step 5.** Keep going until you run out of wool, then just tie a new length on and carry on.



**Step 6.** Keep weaving until you get to the edge of your circle. Then tie to end to one of the star lines.



# Make your own Mayan Weaving



**Step 7.** Use some coloured pens to decorate around the edge of your circle.

You have finished your weaving, don't forget to share what you have created with us

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# Spike's Colouring Page



**Itzamna** is ruler of heavens and of day and night.  
Here's an outline for you to colour.





## Make your own Mayan Pyramid Picture



**Step 1.** Gather your materials, you will need, coloured card, a ruler, scissors, a pencil, some glue and some scrap card.



**Step 2.** Use the ruler to draw lines on one sheet of card, see picture.



**Step 3.** Cut along these lines so you are left with strips of card.

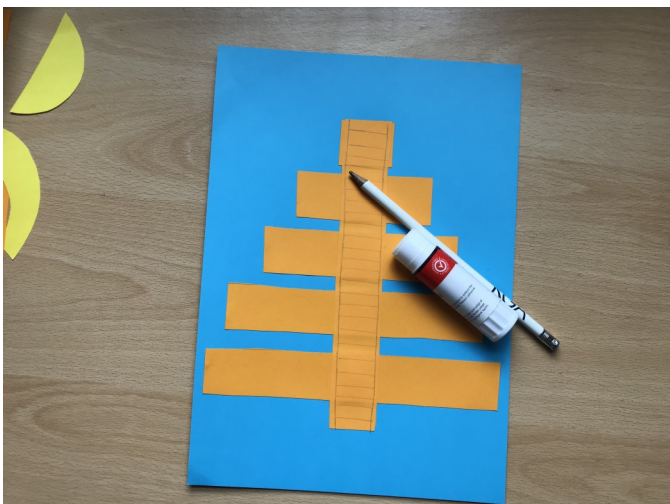
## Make your own Mayan Pyramid Picture



**Step 4.** Cut the length of each strip so that it forms the pyramid shape, see picture.



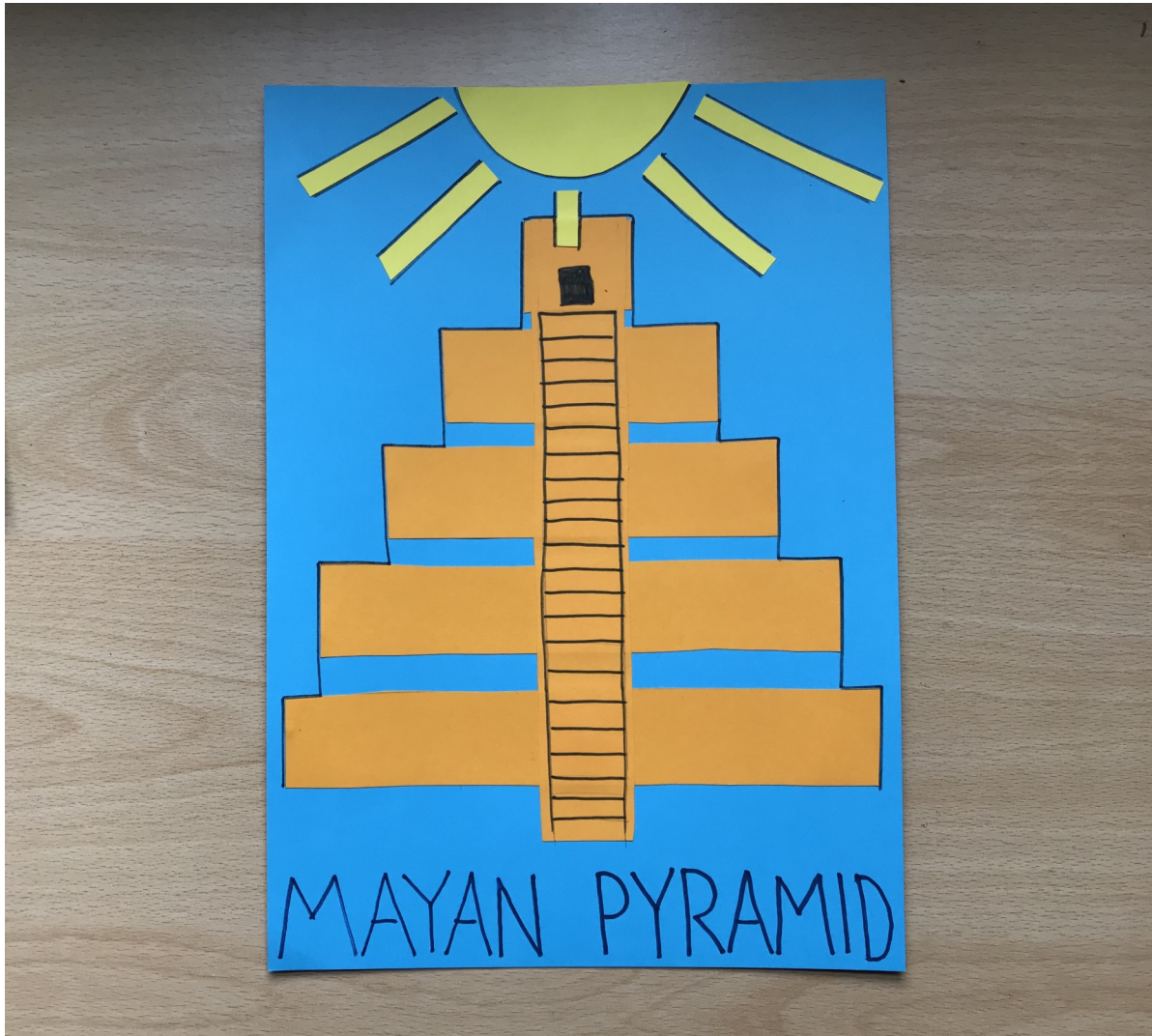
**Step 5.** Glue these onto the other piece of card.



**Step 6.** Use one of the left over strips and glue this down the middle of your pyramid, this will become your stairs.



## Make your own Mayan Pyramid Picture



**Step 7.** Use the scrap paper and pens to add detail to your picture.

You have finished your picture, don't forget to share what you have created with us

**#SpikeDinosAdventures**





**For more information, help with school questions, to book school visits, or jus to say hello, please contact us at [museumeducation@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:museumeducation@maidstone.gov.uk).**

**Thanks for reading, downloading or dipping into our resource.**

**Roz and Vicky**

**Maidstone Museum Learning Team**

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