

The Maya of Long Ago



photo by Dennis Jarvis

Mini Fact:

Sixty cities were built by the Maya. The cities were very large with many people in them.

The Maya built an advanced civilization in the area of Mexico and Central America about 2,000 years ago. They were astronomers who developed an incredible calendar to keep track of events over many thousands of years. They built pyramids and developed large cities. The Mini Page takes a look at the Maya civilization this week.

Amazing scientists

The Maya developed one of the most complex civilizations of the ancient world. Their scholars created an advanced system of writing.

Unlike many other ancient people, they developed in **isolation** (eye-suh-LAY-shun), or away from other civilizations. Other ancient cultures, such as the Egyptians and Greeks, learned from others. The Maya had to discover all on their own.

They built great structures without metal tools, **beasts of burden** or vehicles with wheels, such as carts. (Beasts of burden are big animals tame enough to help carry heavy loads.)

Pyramids

The Maya built great pyramids that were lined up to follow the movements of the sun.

For example, on the shortest day of the year, or the winter **solstice** (SOHL-stis), the sun rose at a certain spot over a pyramid temple.

Priests knew that from that day forward, the sun would rise a bit to the north each day. When the sun finally rose directly north of the pyramid, the rains would come. Other pyramids were lined up with the setting sun. They were all built to predict when it would rain.

Calendars

The Maya used two calendars throughout the year. One calendar gave the times to perform rituals. Today, this kind of calendar could help us keep track of events like planting and harvesting crops.

The Mayan ritual calendar covered 260 days. It was made up of 13 numbers and 20 names.

Their second calendar was a yearlong calendar made up of 365 days. It was divided into 18 months of 20 days each. The Maya added five extra days to finish off the year. The Maya used this calendar to help them keep track of birthdays and holidays.

Chichen Itza

In the Yucatan Peninsula is a Mayan city called Chichen Itza (chee-CHEN eet-SAH), where a large step-pyramid is located. This structure is called El Castillo (cas-TEE-yo), and it was built in dedication to the Plumed Serpent. Experts believe it was built between A.D. 1050 and 1300.

Chichen Itza was a **bustling**, or busy, place long ago. Historians estimate it was established around A.D. 400.

Now it is one of the Seven Wonders of the New World and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Maya chose the location for Chichen Itza because of the two sinkholes nearby that provided water. Since the city is located in a dry tropical forest, being near water was very important for the Mayas' survival.

The Maya people often watched for **astronomical**, or sky, events. The Chichen Itza observatory, called El Caracol, was built to align with the stars, sun and planets.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/TMPMaya

At the library:

- “Amazing Ancients: World of the Maya” by Elaine A. Kule
- “The Ancient Maya” by Jackie Maloy

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of the Maya are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

CALENDARS, CASTILLO, CITIES, CROPS, DAYS, ISOLATION, MAYA, MONTHS, PLANETS, PLANTING, PYRAMIDS, RAIN, SINKHOLES, SOLSTICE, STARS, SUN, TOOLS, WATER.

R	F	F	M	A	Y	A	A	J	T	Q	F	W	H	I
P	C	R	O	P	S	C	A	L	E	N	D	A	R	S
L	Z	S	N	R	A	I	N	C	O	V	Y	T	Y	O
A	S	O	S	I	N	K	H	O	L	E	S	E	G	L
N	T	L	S	E	I	T	I	C	Y	U	K	R	C	A
T	A	S	T	O	O	L	S	Y	A	D	D	J	H	T
I	R	T	G	O	W	Y	P	L	A	N	E	T	S	I
N	S	I	V	P	S	D	I	M	A	R	Y	P	B	O
G	X	C	P	M	O	N	T	H	S	M	N	U	S	N
X	W	E	O	L	L	I	T	S	A	C	W	O	J	X

Cook's Corner


Cauliflower Mash

You'll need:

- 1 head cauliflower, cut into florets
- 1 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/3 cup light sour cream
- 1 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese

What to do:

1. Boil cauliflower in chicken broth for 5 minutes.
2. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Uncover and continue cooking until liquid is reduced and cauliflower is tender. If necessary, pour off 1/4 to 1/2 cup liquid. Remove pan from heat.
4. Add butter, sour cream and cheese. Beat on low with a hand mixer until mixture is the consistency of mashed potatoes (it may be slightly chunky).



You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

1. Raising crops and animals (7-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □

2. Writing, music, visuals or sculpture created from imagination (3-letter noun)

□ □ □

3. A place to worship and show honor and respect (6-letter noun)


□ □ □ □ □ □

4. Events of the past that have been recorded for the future (7-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □

ROOTONYM®

by Jan & Carey Orr Cook



Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: Farming, Art, Temple, History.

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