



KS2 History: A Non-European Society – Mayan Civilisation c. AD 900

Lesson details

Lesson title	A Non-European Society – Mayan Civilisation c. AD 900
Subject	History
Year group	KS2 (Year 4/5/6)
Duration	60 minutes
Topic/focus	A non-European society that contrasts with British history: Mayan civilisation c. AD 900
Date	_____

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to:

- ☐ Identify that the Mayan civilisation existed in Central America around c. AD 900.
- ☐ Locate the Mayan region on a world map and place it on a timeline alongside key periods in British history.
- ☐ Describe key features of Mayan life, including cities, writing, calendars, religion, and farming.
- ☐ Compare Mayan civilisation with Britain at a similar time by identifying similarities and differences.

- ☐ Use appropriate historical terms, including civilisation, temple, glyphs, calendar, and maize.
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Key vocabulary

- civilisation
 - Mayan
 - Central America
 - temple
 - pyramid
 - glyphs
 - calendar
 - maize
 - city-state
 - archaeologist
 - timeline
 - contrast
 - similarity
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Resources

- ☐ World map showing Central America and Britain
 - ☐ Timeline showing c. AD 900 in Mayan civilisation and British history
 - ☐ Images of Mayan cities, temples, pyramids, writing, calendars, and farming
 - ☐ Short information texts or fact cards about Mayan life
 - ☐ Comparison grid for Mayan civilisation and Britain
 - ☐ Large paper for group posters, pens, pencils, and glue
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Lesson procedure

Time	Activity	Description	Materials
10 minutes	Starter	• Show a picture of a Mayan temple or city in the jungle. • Ask: “Where do you think this is? When do you think people built this?” • Show Central America on a world map and explain that the image is from the Mayan civilisation around c. AD 900. • Transition to the Mayan Fact Finders task.	World map; Mayan temple or city image
10–15 minutes	Main teaching input	• Introduce Mayan civilisation in Central America. • Cover Mayan cities and temples, writing using glyphs, calendars, religion, farming with maize, and daily life. • Place c. AD 900 on a timeline and compare it with Britain at a similar time. • Model how to identify key information from a fact card	World map; timeline; images; fact cards

		and compare two societies. • Distribute the fact and picture cards.	
25–30 minutes	Pupil activities	Activity 1: Mayan Fact Finders • In groups, give pupils fact and picture cards about Mayan civilisation. • Ask pupils to complete an information sheet: “Where did they live?” “What did they build?” “How did they write?” “What did they eat?” Activity 2: Comparing Mayans and Britain • Using a comparison grid, ask pupils to list at least three similarities and three differences between Mayan civilisation and Britain at a similar time, including buildings, writing, religion, or farming.	Fact and picture cards; information sheet; comparison grid; large paper; pens; pencils; glue
5–10 minutes	Plenary	• Ask groups to	World map;

		share one similarity and one difference. • Revisit the world map and timeline to reinforce where and when the Mayan civilisation existed. • Discuss how we know about the Mayans through ruins, artefacts, writing, and archaeology	timeline; group work
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Challenge & differentiation

- **Struggling learners** — Use picture-supported fact cards, a partially completed comparison grid, and sentence stems.
- **On-level learners** — Complete the information sheet and comparison grid, including at least three similarities and three differences.
- **Higher-attaining pupils** — Write a short paragraph explaining one key way the Mayan civilisation contrasts with British history, using historical terms.
- **English Language Learners** — Pre-teach the key vocabulary and pair terms with visuals during the activities.

Homework

- ☐ Design a “Mayan civilisation” information card or mini-poster for a museum display.
- ☐ Include a picture and a few sentences explaining one key feature of Mayan life and how it is different from Britain.

Assessment notes

- **Map and timeline accuracy** – Check that pupils locate the Mayan civilisation correctly on a simple map and timeline.
- **Historical terminology** – Check pupils' use of historical terms and their ability to describe key features.
- **Contrasts with British history** – Note who can identify and explain at least one clear contrast between Mayan civilisation and British history.