

The Time Traveler's Project



Your Trip Through History

DISCOVER THE

Maya



Archaeology Now

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA - HOUSTON SOCIETY

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DISCOVER

THE MAYA

Learn about
archaeology
and the Maya
in this series
of activities
in this packet.

Welcome to Parents!

We are excited to welcome you and the children in your care to a new adventure sponsored by Archaeology Now—The Time Travelers Family Project! The goal of this project is to introduce world cultures to you without leaving home. While you might not be able to travel across your city or to another country, using your imagination you can still travel through time! A magical armchair journey for everyone.

We have put together a wide variety of activities for different learning styles, interests, and age levels. *Our goal is to create materials for fourth- to fifth-grade students. However, some pieces might appeal to younger children.* You know your child best. Please feel free to use these materials based on your child's curiosity and skill levels!



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THE MAYA

Get Your Child Involved!

We'd love to hear from you and your children!

If you have questions or want to send us copies of artwork that you've created, please feel free to contact us at archaeologyhouston@gmail.com.

Over the coming weeks, we will post your pictures and questions on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ArchaeologyNowHouston under the heading **"Time Travelers Family Projects—Maya."** We will also feature additional interesting stories or interviews. Some of your pictures and stories might be placed on our website as well. Maybe your picture or questions will be included!

My oh Maya!
Can we dig ya!





DISCOVER

THE MAYA

What is an Archaeologist?

DID YOU KNOW? Archaeologists study the HUMAN past. They do this by studying things that people have left behind. These things are called artifacts. Archaeologists write the stories of people who lived before us.

Archaeologists work all around the world. They work under water. They even work in space! But usually they find artifacts by digging in the ground.

Archaeologists work with artists, scientists, and historians. They want to understand how people lived and how they solved problems a long time ago.

You could say that an archaeologist is a time-traveling detective!



Join us in discovery!

Archaeologists do not study dinosaurs like paleontologists do.



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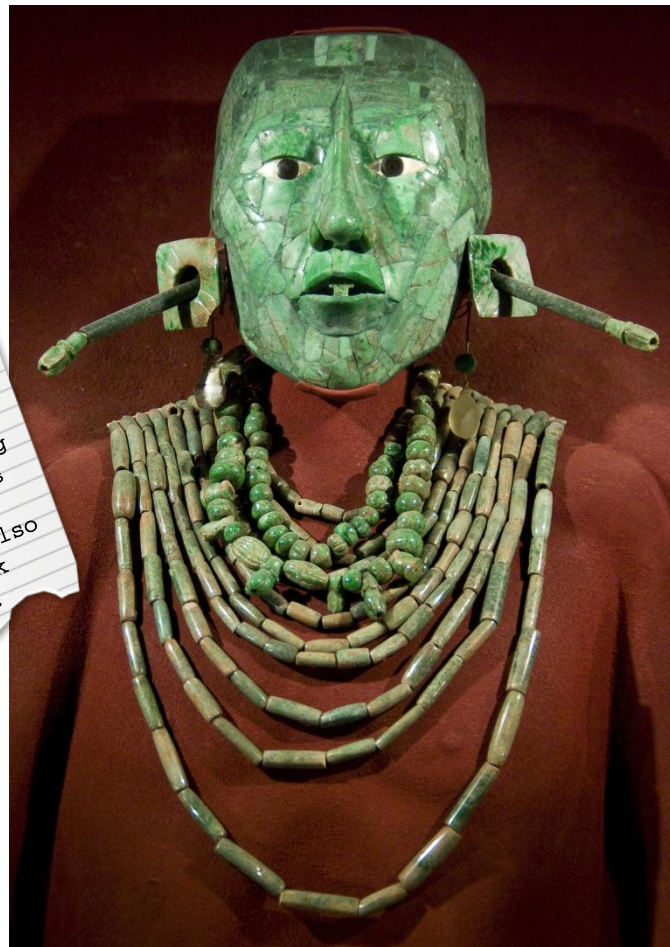
THE MAYA

The Fabulous Maya World!

How would you feel if the principal of your school had a tall cone-shaped head? What if she had sharp pointy teeth covered in jewels and wore huge earrings? What if he wore a coat of jaguar skin? Wouldn't that look strange?

Also, what if you found out that your principal discovered "zero" and was building a big stone temple behind the school? Suddenly, your principal seems even more interesting, right?

THEN, what if your principal suddenly stopped building that stone temple? What if he left the school without saying goodbye? Wouldn't you try to find out what happened?



This is jewelry found on the body of a famous and powerful king named Pacal. His earrings are huge! He is also wearing a mask made of jade.



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The Fabulous Maya World!

Well, people exactly like the principal we've been talking about lived in Central America and Southern Mexico. They were called the Maya. These brilliant people grew foods that people around the world knew nothing about. They developed a complex writing system. They used very accurate calendars. They built huge temples and cities of stone.

There is a real mystery about the Maya. This mystery has confused archaeologists for many years. The Maya left their beautiful large cities and moved across Southern Mexico and Central America to live in small villages. No one is sure why.

Let's travel through time to learn more about the Maya!



Jimmy Baum, Unsplash

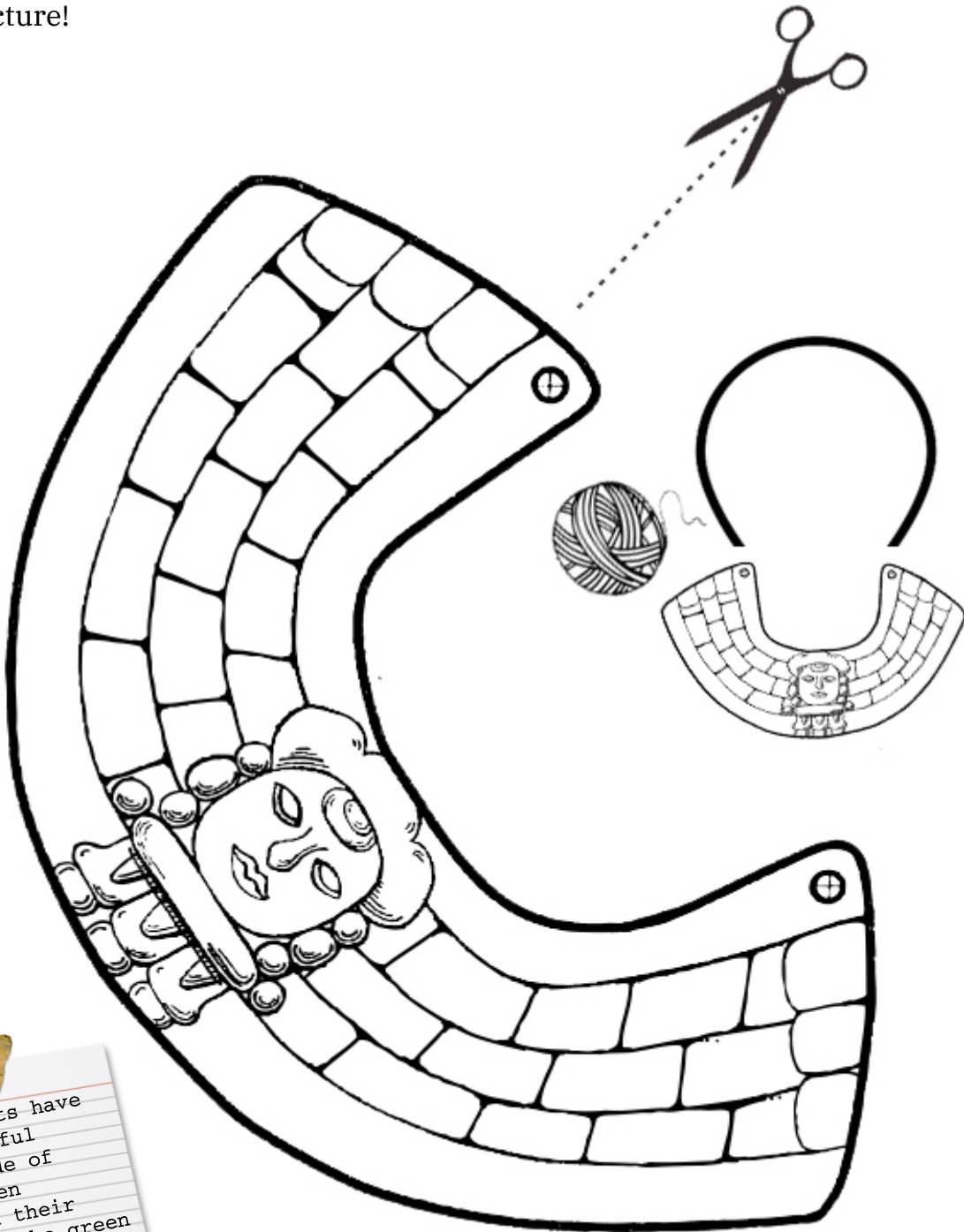


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Make Maya Jewelry

Color this necklace and cut it out. Put a piece of string through the holes and wear it around your neck like a Maya king that you saw in the picture!



Archaeologists have found beautiful jewelry made of jade, a green mineral, in their excavation. The green color of jade meant life to the Maya.



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Where Did the Maya Live?

DID YOU KNOW? The Maya lived in many different types of environments. They had to adapt their ways of life to different climates and weather conditions.

Maya life was shaped by the natural world around them. Some Maya lived in the hot rainforest. Other Maya lived in the cool mountains, on the dusty plains, or on the coasts near beaches of Southern Mexico and Central America. All around them, there were many animals, colorful birds, and plants. They studied the stars at night. They thought that the stars, plants, and animals had powerful magical control over their lives.

Where in the world did the Maya live?





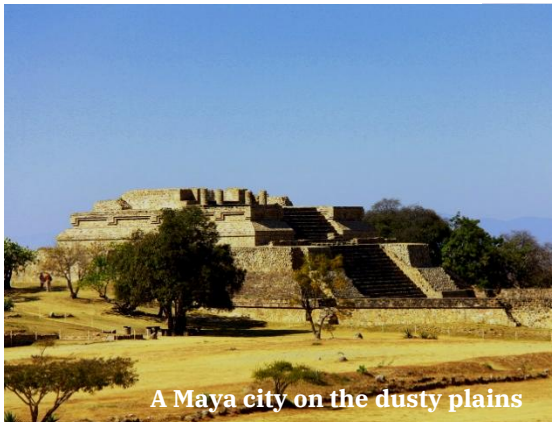
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Where Did the Maya Live?

The Maya created a fascinating culture from around 2600 BCE to 1500 CE. They did not have technology like wheels or large metal tools. They did not have big animals like cows or horses to help carry things. But they were able to build enormous cities out of stone.

Over time, their lives changed. They left these big cities and we don't know why. But the Maya still live in smaller villages in the region today.



A Maya city on the dusty plains



A Maya city in the rainforest



A Maya city on the coastline



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Compare Your Life to the Maya

DID YOU KNOW? Just like the Maya, your neighborhood, and the natural world around you, influences the way you live your life.

Is your neighborhood hot or cold? Are there many animals around? What kind of trees and plants do you see? How does your neighborhood influence the kind of house you live in? How does your natural world influence the clothes you wear?

Write About Your Natural World

Write here about the natural world around you or make a drawing of something in your natural world or neighborhood that is important to you. Perhaps you can make a drawing of your neighborhood on a separate sheet of paper!



Where in the world do you live? Draw a circle to show.





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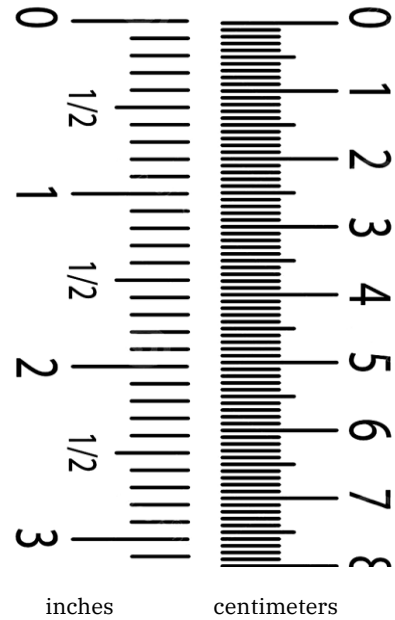
Artifacts help archaeologists learn about how people lived in the past.

Measure an Artifact

DID YOU KNOW? Archaeologists find artifacts when they dig. One of the first things they do is measure them.



Sabena Jane Blackbird / Alamy Stock



You can pretend that you are an archaeologist who is working in Central America! You have found Maya points (also called arrowheads) in your excavation (where you are digging)! These points were attached to a stick. This stick made a spear or arrow for hunting. Included on this page is a small ruler. Cut it out and use it to measure the artifacts shown.

Measure and record the length of the PIECE ON THE LEFT from top to bottom. Write the answer in centimeters and inches here:

Length from top to bottom in inches _____

Length from top to bottom in centimeters _____

Next, measure and record the length of the SMALLEST PIECE here:

Length from top to bottom inches _____

Length from top to bottom in centimeters _____



Who Are the Maya?

DID YOU KNOW? Just like in *your* city, a Maya city had many types of people. These people were kings, priests, people who made things, and farmers.

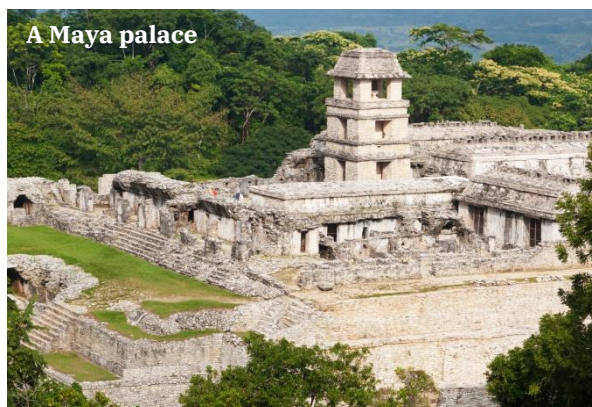
ELITE

We know a lot about the elite, such as kings or priests because they lived in palaces of stone. Stone is a good building material because it lasts a long time. We know what the elite looked like because they carved pictures of themselves in stone. They also loved to paint pictures of themselves on walls and pots.

The elite had beautiful clothing. They wore lots of jewelry. They loved big hats—the bigger the better! They had heads shaped like cones. To do this, they wrapped babies' heads with a cloth. They shaped their teeth into points and put jewels in them.

The man in this picture is a powerful king. Can you see his big hat? You might think he looks strange. But he looked handsome to the Maya elite!

The picture below is the palace of the king in the picture. It was very large!



A Maya palace



A Maya king



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Who are the Maya?

FARMERS

We don't know what Maya farmers looked like. There aren't any stone carvings of them. But we know that farmers were important to Maya society. They kept everyone fed. In fact, most Maya were farmers!

Corn was very important to the Maya. It was the main food that they grew. One of their most powerful gods was the corn god. Here is a picture of a corn god.

Homes for farmers were simple straw houses. Straw houses aren't very strong, so we don't know exactly what farmers' homes looked like. But we have some clues by looking at homes built by Maya living in villages today. These homes were easy to build, and the farmers could make the straw themselves.



The Metropolitan Museum of Art



An ordinary Maya house



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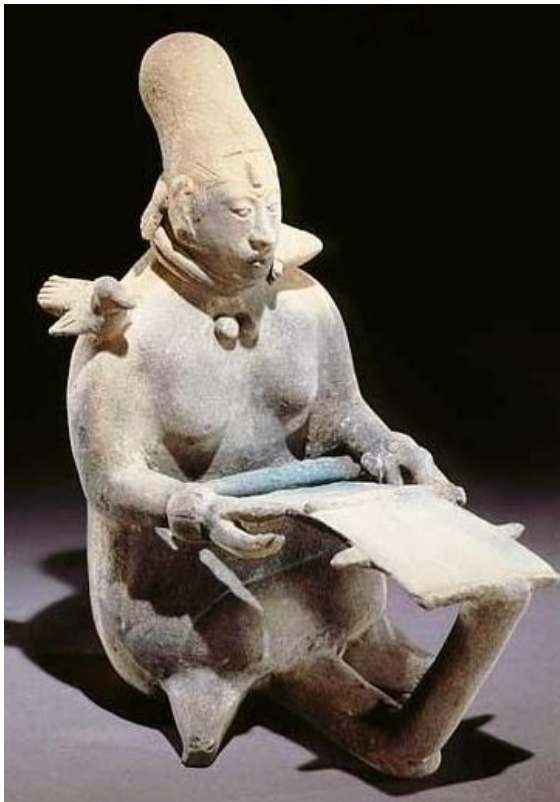
Who are the Maya?

CRAFTSPEOPLE

Some Maya craftspeople made pots. Other craftspeople carved wood and stone. Some made musical instruments. Others wove cloth.

On the left is a figure of a woman. She is weaving cloth on a small loom. This statue is unusual because it shows someone who is not elite.

On the right in the bottom picture, is a modern Maya woman working on a loom. The loom looks like the one in the statue. The modern Maya woman is weaving beautiful material. She is using ancient patterns to make her material.



Justin Kerr, LCMA





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Women and men both wore huge earrings as a sign of their elite status.

Maya Coloring Sheet

This is a mom and her son! Their fancy clothes, their jewelry, and their hair styles show that they are elite. Her name is Lady Sak K'uk. She is giving a headdress to her son Pakal. She wants to show that he is the new king. He is sitting on a wooden throne carved with jaguar heads. Jaguars are large cats that live in the rainforest.



Drawing adapted from the Schele Drawing Collection.
Famsi.org



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Maya Writing

DID YOU KNOW? The Maya invented a writing system using pictures that are called glyphs. Do you think it's hard to learn to write cursive? The Maya had to learn over 800 symbols!

Maya glyphs can represent ideas or sounds. Some glyphs were carved in stone. Some were painted on pots. Some were painted on paper in books. They created beautiful art and used glyphs to tell stories.



The Maya invented a paper made out of tree bark. They used this paper to write books. Then, when they were finished, they folded the paper like an accordion. This sort of book is called a **codex**.

There used to be thousands of Maya books. But the Spanish destroyed many of them when they came to the Americas. Today, there are only four left. Here are some of the pages from one of the four books that are left. This codex is in a museum in Spain.



PRISMA ARCHIVO / Alamy Stock Photo



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Write Your Own Code

Why don't you try inventing your own code? This can be a secret code that only you know! You can use symbols like the Maya used or you can use letters like we use today. You can write your code here or on a separate sheet of paper.



Make Your Own Codex

After you have invented your code, write a message on a large sheet of paper. Then fold it like an accordion. Now you have made a book just like a Maya codex! What will archaeologists think when they find your book?





Decode Maya Numbers

DID YOU KNOW? The Maya counted on their fingers and toes! Archaeologists think this is because they wore sandals. They used a shell to mean zero. A dot meant numbers 1-4. A bar meant 5.

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

Maya Numerals



Decode Numbers

You are an archaeologist working on Maya ruins. You have found a wall painted with the numbers shown below. Can you decode them using the chart above? The answer is written below, upside down. (Don't cheat!)



1st Horizontal Line _____
 2nd Horizontal Line _____

ANSWER:
 1st row: 2, 1, 1, 1
 2nd row: 3, 16, 17, 12, 9



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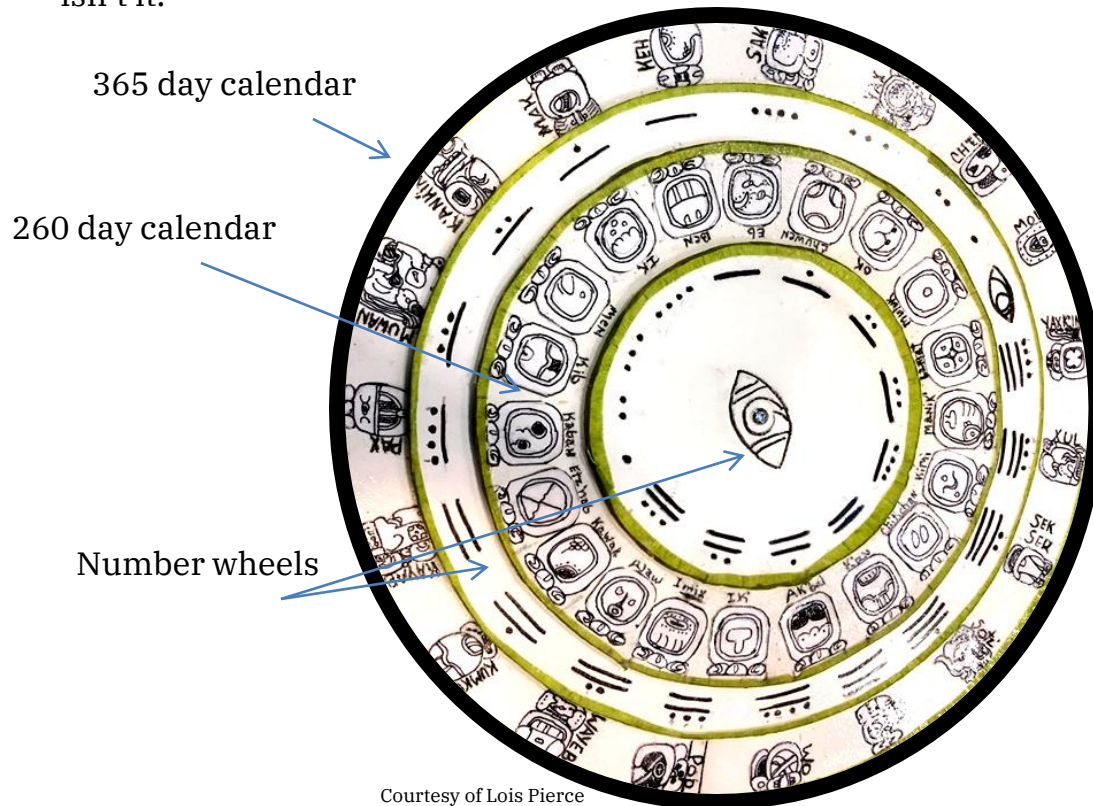
THE MAYA

Maya calendars might be some of the most accurate in the world!

Maya Calendar

DID YOU KNOW? The Maya were great timekeepers. They had TWO calendars! These calendars were very accurate. The Maya used them to predict the movements of the sun, moon, stars, and planets.

Maya calendars were made of two circles that were connected. One circle had 365 days. The other circle was for religious events. It had 260 days. There were also circles with numbers to identify the days. Together, they were called the **“Long Count Calendar.”** Every 52 years, the two calendars would line up. A new calendar cycle would start then. That IS a long time, isn't it!



Calculate Your Maya Birth Date

To calculate your Maya birth date, use this link:

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

Insert a date and press “convert.” Then you can see the glyphs and the numbers used for your birthdate. Copy your Maya birth date from the website and write it on another piece of paper. It will be like a Maya birth certificate!

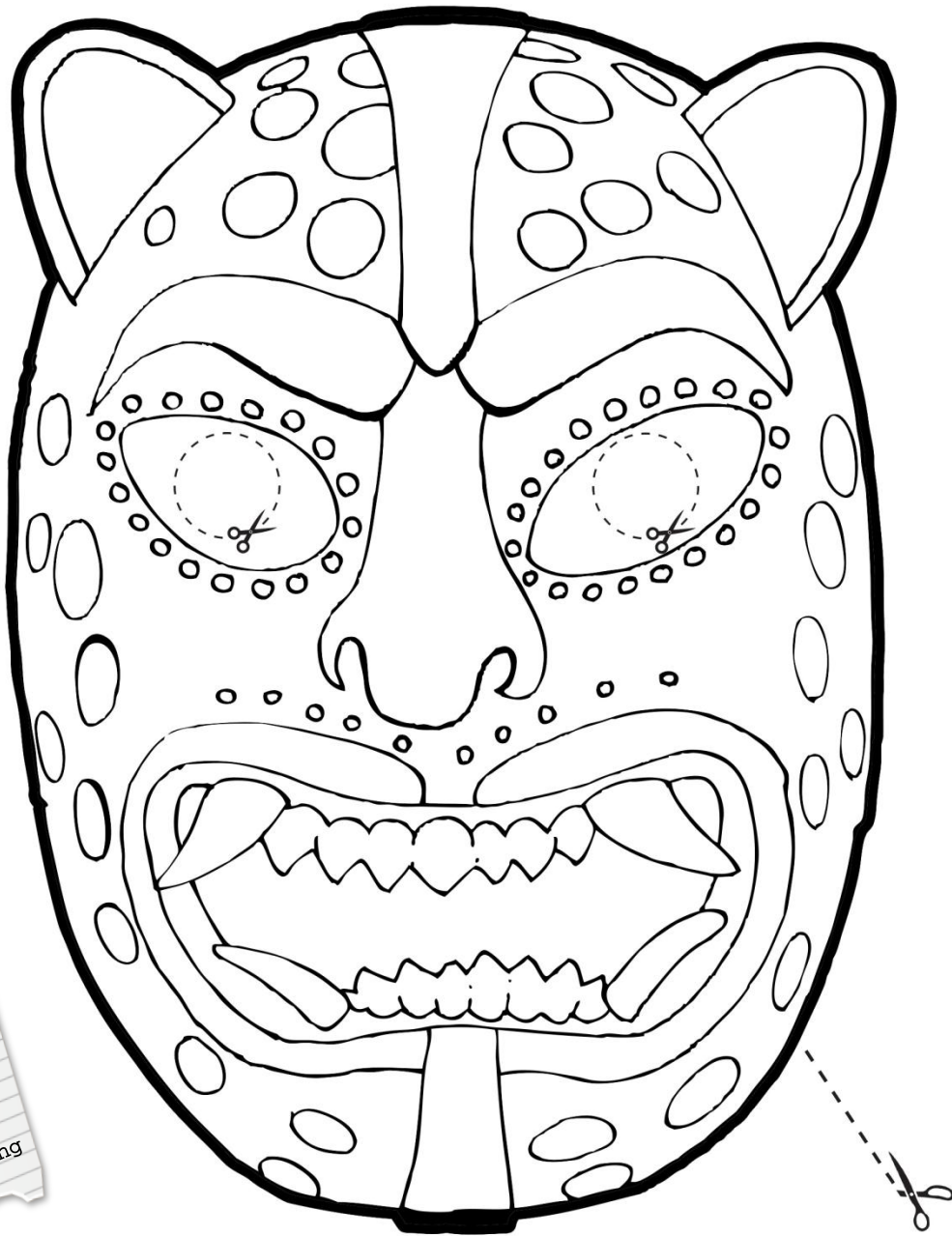


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Make a Maya Mask

The jaguar is a powerful large cat that lives in the rainforest. Color this mask in the shape of a jaguar and cut it out. Glue it to a stick and hold it in front of your face. You can pretend that you have the power of the jaguar!



Maya kings often used masks in the shape of animals. They thought that they would have the power of an animal by wearing its image.

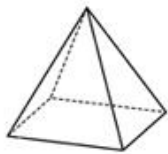


DISCOVER

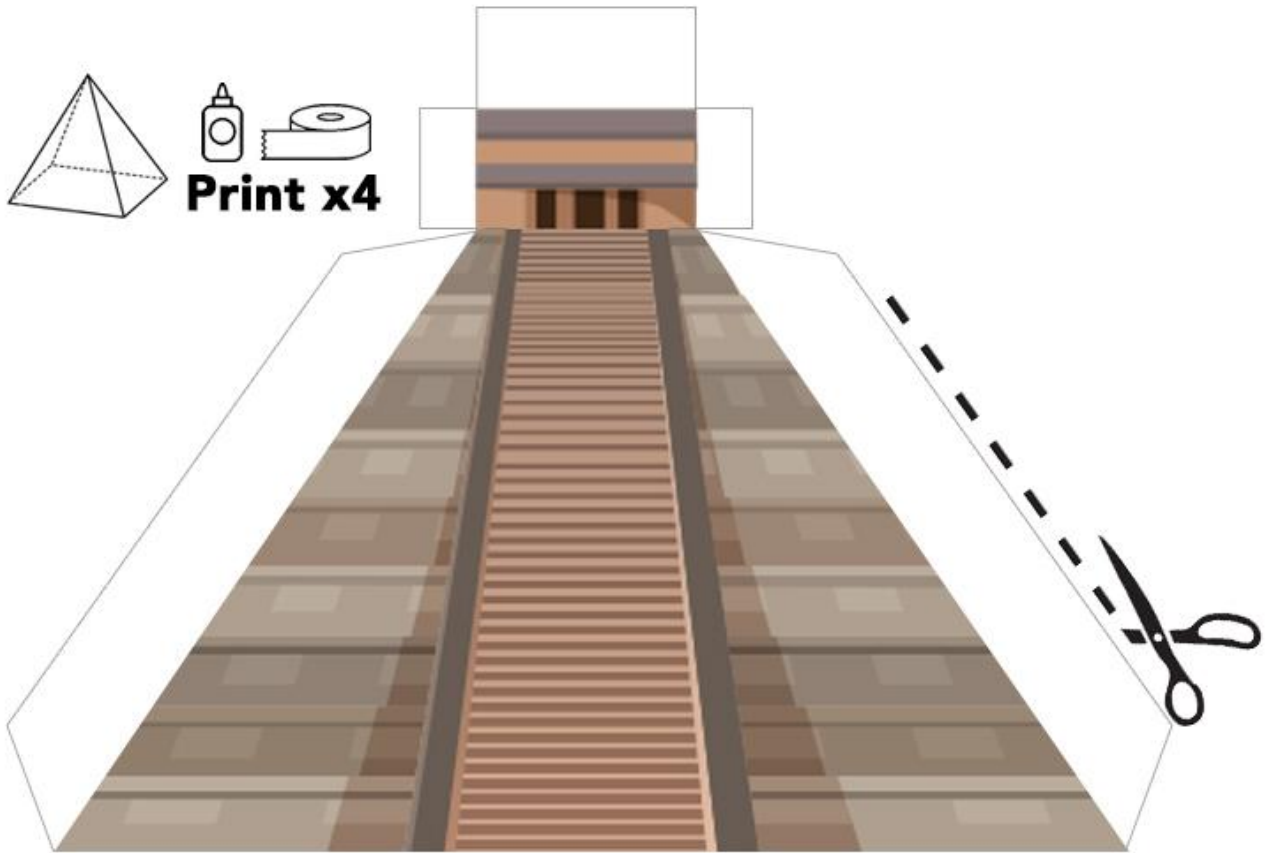
THE MAYA

Make a Maya Pyramid

Print four copies of this Maya pyramid. Then cut it out and glue it together. You will have your own three-dimensional Maya pyramid!



Print x4



The Maya built large pyramids out of stone. We still don't know how they did it! They worshipped their gods in temples on top and buried their elite inside.



The Maya thought that cacao was so valuable that they used cacao beans as money!

Make a Maya Chocolate Drink

DID YOU KNOW? Chocolate, known as cacao, comes from beans found in a pod that grows on a small tree in the rainforest. The Maya discovered how to grind the beans to make a powder to make a chocolate drink.

Only the wealthy could drink chocolate. This recipe is like a Maya drink. The difference is the Maya did not have milk because they did not have cows! They could use honey to sweeten it.



A cacao pod, showing beans that are ground to make chocolate powder.

Maya Chocolate Drink

3 tbsp instant hot chocolate powder
1 cup milk
1 tsp ground cinnamon
A pinch of chili powder

Directions:

1. Warm the milk in a microwave or heat it in a pot on the stove.
2. Mix the chocolate powder, cinnamon, and chili powder together.
3. Stir the chocolate/chili/cinnamon mixture into the warm milk.
4. Pour the milk into a mug.
5. Enjoy!



The Maya word for cacao spelled in glyphs was KA-KA-WA



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THE MAYA

Chocolate was mixed with water and chilis to make a drink for parties. Archaeologists think cacao was drunk as early as 1400 BCE.

Put Together a Pot

The Maya made beautiful pottery cups for drinking chocolate, or cacao. You have found sherds (broken pieces) from a chocolate cup in your archaeological excavation. Cut out the pieces and glue them onto a separate piece of paper. You will discover a beautiful chocolate cup.





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THE MAYA

The Maya invented the first-ever team sport in the world!

Maya Sports

DID YOU KNOW? The Maya ball game started with a parade. Priests and players in huge feather headdresses walked into the ball court. Musicians and singers played to celebrate the game. Doesn't that sound like a sports game today?

A ball game was a big deal! The Maya ball game was called Pok-a-Tok. The game was so popular that most cities had ball courts. The Maya played the ball game fun. But they also played it for religious reasons.



They used a solid eight-inch rubber ball to play the game. The players wore padding to protect themselves from being hurt. The padding looked like shin guards used in soccer today.

Here is a ball court. The courts are shaped like the Capitol letter "I." Can you see the small dark circle on the right? That is the goal the players had to hit the ball through! A close-up of the goal is in the smaller picture.





Large stone circles called ball court markers were placed into floors of a ball court to show when they were built.

Maya Ballplayers

Rules for the Maya ball game:

- Do not touch the ball with feet or hands.
- Use hips or arms to knock the ball.
- Score by knocking ball into round circular goal on the side of the court.

Here is a Maya ball player shown on a ball court marker. He is wearing a large headdress that he would have worn for the parade at the beginning of the game. He is dressed with protective pads on his knees, waist, and hip, and he is hitting a large ball with his hip. The glyphs around the outside are calendar dates and the player's name.



Leon Rafael, Istock



Make Your Own Sports Marker!

Use a large paper plate. Write your name and the date around the outside. Then draw a picture or paste of photograph of yourself in sports gear on the inside. You can also cut out a picture of one of your favorite players from a magazine and glue it inside. Maybe you can place this on the floor of your bedroom to pretend it's a Maya ball court!

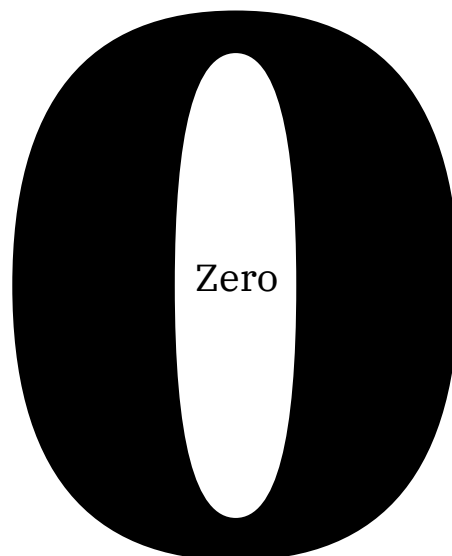


Some Maya Achievements

The Maya were among the first to grow corn, tomatoes, and chilis for food. They were some of the first to eat chocolate. They used zero in their math before Europeans. They used rubber to make balls for sports.



Chocolate



Zero

Before Europeans learned about Central and South America, they did not have any of these foods.

Tomatoes & Corn



Rubber



Words to Know

Archaeologist A person who studies the human past. An archaeologist looks at the things that people have left behind.

Cacao A tree in the rainforest with large pods. Beans from the pod are dried and ground into a powder to make chocolate.



Maya A group of people that began around 2600 BCE in Central America. They developed a calendar and a writing system. They built very large stone buildings without metal tools or a wheel. Their civilization began to disappear around 1521 CE. Today, there are still small groups of Maya that live in Central America and parts of Mexico.



Elelicht, Wiki Commons

Mayan The language of the Maya people.

Codex A book written in glyphs. They were made from a type of paper made of tree bark and folded like an accordion.



Pyramid Large triangle structure built out of stone. Maya used them to worship their gods. They also buried their kings there.



Words to Know

Elite Important people in society. They have special privileges and can tell ordinary people what to do. Maya elite wore fancy clothes, huge headdresses, lots of jewelry, and had jewels in their teeth. The elite were kings or priests.



Jaguar A large, spotted cat, like a leopard, that lives in Central America. The elite used jaguar skins as clothing. This showed others how powerful they were.



The Game A ball game called Pok-a-Tok was invented by the Maya. It was played in a court. A rubber ball was bounced off the arms and hips of the players. The players



wore pads to protect their bodies. To score, the players tried to get the ball through a goal shaped like a circle.

Sherds Broken pieces of pottery. Because pottery is so delicate, it can break easily. Archaeologists have to put the broken pieces together like a jigsaw puzzle. It is very unusual to find a whole pot.



Glyph A picture that represents a word or group of words. The Maya had more than 800 glyphs.



You! The smart young person who is reading this page right now! We hope you have had fun and will grow up to have many adventures!



DISCOVER

THE MAYA

Maya Word Search

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

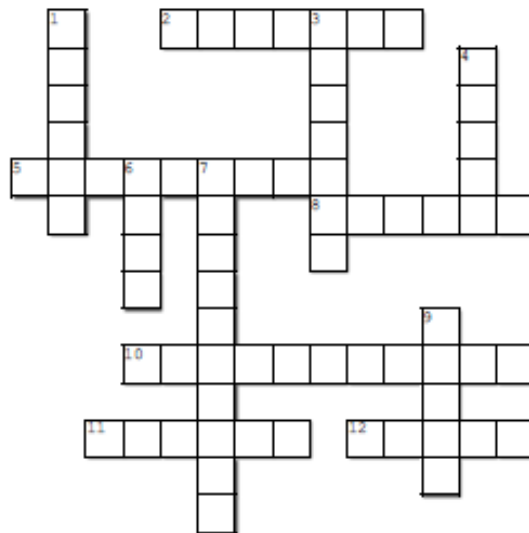
MAYA
CACAO
SHERD
GLYPH
ELITE
ZERO
ARCHAEOLOGY
CORN
PYRAMID



Maya Crossword Puzzle

Maya

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

- 2. A large triangular stone building built by the Maya
- 5. The food the Maya made from cacao
- 8. The material Maya balls were made out of
- 10. The study of the human past
- 11. A large cat that lived in the rain forests near the Maya
- 12. A piece of broken pottery

Down

- 1. Maya writing symbols
- 3. Something we don't know and want to find out
- 4. Important people in Maya society
- 6. The shape of the Maya elite's heads
- 7. The name of the 52-year long Maya calendar
- 9. A folded Maya book



Maya Word Search Answer Key

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



Maya Crossword Puzzle Answer Key

