

# Great Links Tor—Ancient Maya Knowledge Organiser

Timeline									
1100 B.C.	800 B.C.	400 B.C.	300 B.C.	100 B. C.	600 A.D.	800 A.D.	900 A.D.	1502 A.D.	1517 A.D.
The first hunter-gatherers on the pacific coast	Village farming and trade become established	First solar calendars invented	Cities become centres for trade and kings begin to rule	First pyramids are built	Cities start expanding quickly	Building of stepped pyramid of Chichen-Itza	Decline of Maya cities	First contact with Europeans is made	The Spanish arrive and begin their colonisation of Central America.

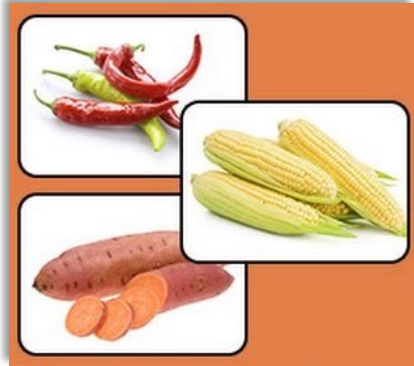


Mayan territory was in Central America. It was spread across several modern day countries—Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. The Maya built more than 60 cities, most of which are found in modern-day Mexico and Guatemala. Territory stretched over thousands of miles! There were three main regions.

- Coastal cities—such as Iximche were near the Pacific Coast and had a tropical climate meaning they were very hot and humid with a lot of rainfall
- Highland cities—such as Copán. This region's landscape included everything from snowy mountain ranges and volcanoes to lush forests.
- Lowland cities—such as Palenque. Home to a huge range of wildlife and hundreds of species of trees—some grew to 70m tall!
- Conditions for the Maya could be tough but they were skilled in adapting to their surroundings and found clever ways to use the resources around them. They built their grand cities entirely from materials they found in the local area: tools made from stone, wood from the rainforests and limestone they dug out of the earth.

### **Food and Farming:**

Mayan farmers had to deal with rainforests, swamps and steep hillsides. They had limited tools and no animal help but were extremely successful. One farming technique they used was called 'slash and burn'. Farmers chopped down trees and set fire to them. The ash from the fire provided nutrients for crops to grow.



Another method was called 'terrace farming', which enabled farmers to grow crops on steep hills. The Maya would cut ledges into the side of a hill and build walls to support them. That created space for crops to grow.

The Maya grew a lot of maize, beans, squash, sweet potatoes, avocados, tomatoes, papaya and chilli peppers. They also fished in the rivers and hunted for deer, turtles and wild pig.



### **Trade:**

Traders and merchants were powerful people who travelled across Central America and beyond selling everything a Mayan could want. Each Maya city state was good at producing some things but lacked others. For example highland states produced lots of jade and obsidian but few cacao beans, which were mainly found in the lowlands. The geography was so varied that they relied on trade to get the things they needed off each other, from maize, fish and salt to stingray spines (used for bloodletting) and they even traded feathers and jaguar skins with the Aztecs for copper.

### **Religion:**

The Maya believed in a large number of nature gods. Some gods were considered more important and powerful than others. They built a number of pyramid style temples to worship these Gods and believed in the power of sacrifice (including humans!) The most famous of these temples could be found in the city of Chichen Itza.

The Maya believed that rulers were given their power by the gods. They thought rulers could connect to the gods through bloodletting rituals.

