



# The Ancient Maya

## Summary

The Maya Empire was at its most powerful around 600 A.D. The ancient Maya lived in several Central American countries (see map). The Maya were known for their skilled agriculture, pottery, hieroglyphic writing, calendar making and mathematics. They left behind an impressive amount of architecture and symbolic artwork. The Maya were deeply religious and worshiped various gods. They performed elaborate religious rituals and ceremonies in order to please the gods.



## Key Words

<b>Ancient</b>	Belonging to the very distant past and no longer in existence.
<b>Astronomy</b>	The branch of science which deals with space and the physical universe as a whole.
<b>Cacao</b>	Seeds that the Maya used to make chocolate.
<b>cenote</b>	A sinkhole or pit filled with water. Cenotes were sources of water for the Maya.
<b>Chichen Itza</b>	The most powerful Mayan city.
<b>Civilisation</b>	The society, culture and way of life of a particular area.
<b>Classic Period</b>	The golden age of the Mayan civilization.
<b>Code</b>	A book written by the Maya that was created by one long sheet of paper.
<b>Glyph</b>	A symbol used in writing.
<b>Kukulcan</b>	The Maya god of the 4 elements.
<b>Ah Puch</b>	The Maya god of the underworld (death).
<b>Night Jaguar</b>	The Maya god of the night.
<b>Popol Vuh</b>	A book or codex that described Mayan religion and mythology.
<b>Pyramid</b>	The Maya built step pyramids with flat tops. At the top, they built a temple to their gods.
<b>Sacrifice</b>	To give up something valued for the sake of something else.
<b>Settlement</b>	A place where people have come to live and have built homes.
<b>Temple</b>	A building devoted to the worship of gods.

**1100 BC** Settlements begin to appear

**100 BC** The first Maya Pyramids are built

**900-1200 AD** El Castillo is built

**1502 AD** First contact with Europe

**700 BC** Mayan writing is developed

**250 AD** Beginning of the Classic Period

**1000 AD** Chichen Itza is the most powerful city