

# Why did the ancient Maya change the way they lived?

Abandonment	The action or fact of abandoning or being abandoned.
Ceremonial	Relating to or used for formal religious or public events
Climate	The average weather in a given area over a longer period of time.
Codices	A volume, in book form, of manuscripts of an ancient text.
Constellations	A group of stars forming a recognizable pattern that is traditionally named after its apparent form or identified with a mythological figure.
Culture	The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.
Hieroglyphs	Means 'sacred carving' - a type of ancient writing that uses pictures instead of letters.
Plantation	A large area where crops are grown and harvested.
Region	A broad geographical area.
Ritual	A ceremony or series of acts that is always performed in the same way.
Sink hole	Holes in the ground that form when dirt and rocks wash away and cannot support the surface soil, or when the tops of underground caves collapse.
Summer Solstice	Also known as midsummer, occurs when one of the Earth's poles has its maximum tilt towards the Sun.

The Key Questions we will be exploring:

Who are the Maya and where do they live?

What are the main occupations of Maya people today?

What did John and Frederick rediscover in 1839?

What do the ruins of Chichen Itza tell us about the lives of ancient Maya?

Why do historians know so much about ancient Maya society?

Why was pok-a-tok more than just a ball game?

Why did the ancient Maya leave their jungle cities?

## A Basic Maya Timeline

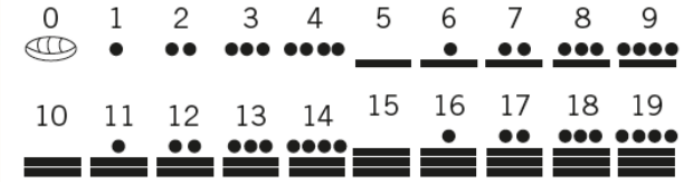
2000 BC to 250 AD	Pre-Classic Period
250 AD to 900 AD	Classic Period
900 AD to 1500 AD	Post-Classic Period
AD 900—1100	Ancient city-based societies of the Maya disappear
1839 AD	John Stephens and Frederick Catherwood re-discover ancient Maya cities.

## Key Facts about the Maya

- Existed around the same time as the Anglo-Saxons in Britain
- Maya society built magnificent ceremonial cities in the jungles of Central America – places where ordinary people who were mostly farmers, visited for special religious or seasonal ceremonies and rituals.
- Maya civilization consisted of city states that traded with each other (mostly, through farming) and often fought each other.
- Achievements:
  - ◇ Hieroglyphs—communication through picture language
  - ◇ Development of a sophisticated number system, including a concept of zero (1000 years before
  - ◇ Awareness and understanding of the movement of the constellations, enabling them to grow crops efficiently through understanding the pattern of the seasons.
- People do not know why the ancient Maya abandoned their jungle cities—but it is likely to be due to a number of different factors.
- Today there are eight million Maya people living in five countries of Central America.



The Maya Region of Central America



Maya Number System

Pok-a-Tok—A ball game that was often played to settle disputes between neighbouring cities. It was a popular leisure activity that was watched by many people. The captain of the losing side would often be beheaded!



Maya Hieroglyphs



Maya Sun Calendar