

Y5 HISTORY KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER: **WHY SHOULD WE REMEMBER THE MAYA?**

Key Vocabulary

Expansion	process of becoming bigger.	Overpopulation	too many people.
Yields	amount of crops produced	Uninhabitable	cannot be lived in.

Key Ideas

- **The Maya are native Americans of central America, who built a great civilisation in the tropical rainforests that lasted over 2,000 years. Many historians think the Maya were the most advanced society in America, even though they had no wheels, no metal and no roads.**
- At its peak, the civilization was made up of 40 great cities and almost 2 million people. With some of the largest populations in the world in these cities, the Maya had to use innovative systems of agriculture to increase yields to feed themselves. The Maya people became expert mathematicians and were skilful astronomers and architects.
- Suddenly, around 900 AD the significant Maya settlements were abandoned. No-one is quite sure why, but it is possible that changes in the climate or overpopulation made the cities uninhabitable. The Maya still live in the same areas of central America today, continuing many of their historical traditions.
- Whilst Europeans were living through a period called the Dark Ages, the Maya were making huge innovations in maths, engineering, astronomy and writing. Some of the most significant artefacts from Maya times are the Dresden, Madrid, Paris and Grolier codices - ancient Maya books, named after the places where they were rediscovered or displayed. The Maya were the only major civilisation in the Americas to develop a writing system that was able to represent their spoken language in symbolic form. Only the most educated would have been able to use this writing system, so scribes became important and respected people.
- The Maya had to overcome the challenge of growing food in the rainforest to feed the growing populations in their urban centres. They used a slash and burn method of farming, crop rotation and terracing.



How do we know about the Maya?

-There are lots of Mayan artefacts to provide first hand (primary) evidence, ranging from huge pyramids to small items of jewellery and pottery. However, huge amounts of Maya culture, writing and artwork has been lost. The reasons for the Maya civilization's sudden collapse are also unclear.



