



The Mayans or Maya made their home in an area called *Mesoamerica*. (modern day Mexico and Central America)

*Maya civilisation* is dated to between the years 1800BC - 1500 AD.

This area included highland and lowland *settlements* and a variety of *climate zones* including *rain-forest*.

Farming was really important to the Mayas. Most people grew their own crops in small fields.

They used to grow crops such as *cacao*, beans (used to make chocolate drink and as currency to trade with), maize, squash and chilli.

If farmers grew more than they could eat, they traded the surplus in markets.

The Mayans were good at farming because they were expert astronomers and mathematicians.

They used to make calendars which meant they were able to work out what time of year to plant crops and when to harvest them.



Ancient Mayan nobility used colourful feathers to decorate headdresses, and jewellery. The most important bird was the *quetzal*, feathers could be 3m.



Mayans developed their writing using hieroglyphics. They decorated buildings with them, often showing war and religious rituals. They also made *codices* (books made from paper bark) - singular is *codex*.



Cloud



Fire



Mountain

The Mayas believed in many gods, each representing a different aspect of life. Communities made animal and human *sacrifices* and offerings to them. They believed in life after death and that those who were sacrificed or who died in battle had a better afterlife.

*Chaac* is the God of rain. Mayans believed he could strike the clouds with his lightning axe to make thunder and rain.

*Itzamna* - God of human beings

*K'inich Ahau* God of sun

*Observatory* - a structure that holds a large telescope for observing the stars and planets.

*Astronomy* - The scientific study of space

*Sacrifice* - kill for a religious reason

All cities had a ball court. Mayans played a ball game which was for entertainment and religious purposes. The ball had to be manoeuvred through high stone hoops to score. Historians think this was the earliest team sport in the world.

*Chichen Itza* is a famous large city built by the Maya people in 600 AD

Maya cities all had temples, stepped pyramids, observatories and palace complexes. Cities states all had separate rulers. Pyramids were the largest buildings and were built as temples and royal tombs. Shrines where rituals were made to the Gods were at the top, and burial chambers inside.

