

Ancient and Modern Cultures

Mayan Civilization, a Case Study



DEFINING CIVILIZATION

Use the following facts, shown in “Ancient and Modern Cultures: The Maya, a Case Study, to complete the Classification Chart on page 3.

1. The Maya built architectural sites, such as temples on pyramids with stepped bases, for religious purposes.
2. Mayan artifacts include pottery with exquisite artwork depicting mythological scenes and daily life. Some pottery contained the name of the writer in hieroglyphics.
3. The pyramids were often used as burial sites for rulers and religious figures who occupied the top positions in the Mayan city-states.
4. Family members of other classes, such as craftsmen and farmers, were buried in homes under stone sleeping benches.
5. Mayan temples were built out of carved stones and were decorated with mural paintings. Their art was extremely sophisticated and used techniques that were known by only a few other civilizations at that time.
6. Mayans performed ceremonies in small, dark rooms within the temples.
7. The face of the honored god was carved into the back walls of the temples.
8. Mayan architects designed sky roofs on temples built to worship the sun god.
9. The Maya used a base number of 20 in mathematics.
10. The Maya used a bar and dot system as "shorthand" for counting. A dot stood for one; a bar stood for five. Larger numbers were written in powers of 20.
11. Mayans understood the concept of zero, but they did not use fractions.
12. Mayan merchants often used cocoa beans for calculations.
13. The Maya developed a sophisticated 260-day calendar based on astronomical observations. Calendar days were numbered 1 to 13, but there were 20 day names, each represented by a unique symbol,
14. The Mayans built “white roads” out of limestone so traders could travel at night.
15. Mayan temples were often laid out to reflect the positions of stars and constellations because religious practices were based on the stars.

16. Mayan astronomers could predict lunar and solar eclipses.
17. Mayans' concept of time incorporated the possibility that antiquity stretched back hundreds of thousands of years.
18. The ancient Mayan Empire spread through Central and North America, covered 500,000 square kilometers, and spanned a period of 3,000 years.
19. The Mayans built an advanced aqueduct system that carried water for agricultural and human use.

CLASSIFICATION CHART

Use this chart to classify the list of facts about Mayan civilization from the video “Ancient and Modern Cultures: The Maya, a Case Study.” Place the number of the fact in the appropriate classification box. If the fact can be classified in more than one way, place the number in as many boxes as appropriate.

Architecture	Trade/Road System
Religious Practices	Crop Cultivation/Farming
Societal Class Stratification	Symbolic Writing
Scientific Discoveries/Advancements	Water System
Mathematics System	Size of Empire