

Meet the Maya

Meet the Wildlife



Stingless
Bees

Quetzal
Bird



Maya Arch

Meet the Buildings

Meet the Artefacts



Atlatl or Throwing Stick

Meet the Maya

This activity (one of a set of three) was developed with the help of Year 4s at Fleecefield School in LB Enfield. It's another one of our transformations activities which are well suited to history and geography. You have a set of cards for role play and discussion. The other linked activities are:

Journey to the Maya and Maya Questions

The webaddress for this activity is:

www.collaborativelearning.org/meetthemaya.html

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Our collaborative talk for learning activities are designed to:

...build on prior knowledge.

...move from concrete to abstract thinking.

...ensure everyone works with everyone else.

...extend social language into curriculum language.

...provide motivating ways to go over the same topic more than once.

For more details go to: www.collaborativelearning.org

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

Project Director: Stuart Scott

We support a network of teaching professionals to develop and disseminate accessible talk-for-learning activities in all subject areas and for all ages.

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies that promote talk across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to develop and use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We want to encourage you to change them and adapt them to your classroom and students. We run teacher workshops and conferences worldwide but mainly in the UK. The project posts online many activities in all subject areas. An online newsletter is also updated regularly.

*These activities are influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in non selective classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening. They provide teachers ideal opportunities for assessment of spoken language.

*They provide scaffolding for differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills. We strongly endorse the principles of the Learning Without Limits group to which we belong.

*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in pupils' first languages and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

*They are generally work effectively over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

Meet the Maya - Notes for teachers

I was not until recently an expert on Maya and when I started research I encountered lots of differing and opposing ideas from archaeologists and epigraphers and educators. So the jury is out. There is still a lot more to dig up than has been dug up and lots more to find out. The Maya themselves are only just learning about their history now that Maya writing has been decoded. This probably makes the topic a good one for hypothetical questions rather than the recall of facts. But children need some basic information about such a different culture and history. I have produced here a series of small information cards on and around ancient and modern Maya which I hope can be used in a variety of different ways.

Background Statements which cards confirm

We still have a lot more to find out about the Maya and their relationship to and influence on and from other central American cultures such as the Olmecs, Toltecs, Mistecs, Zapotecs, Aztecs etc.

We are still guessing about how and why Maya cities grew and declined. Many Maya still live in the same location and are now discovering their history. Every new discovery changes the meaning of everything already discovered.

The study of history is about examining evidence and asking questions.

To understand history of the Maya we need to look at geography, ecology and geology of their area.

Some ideas for using these information cards

There are enough cards for everyone to have one each with quite a few left over. You may want to choose your cards in advance. Children or pairs of children could read their card and then explain their item to another child or pair (you may want to select pairs/groups in advance); then the pairs could join another pair and share information. In fours they could then think up one or two questions to ask the class. There may be children in the class who have information about these questions and can provide answers. Questions without answers could be stored up/ written down for discussion later on.

Another possibility is to pair the cards in advance and for pairs of children to present their information to the rest of the class.

Not every item has a card and some children might be encouraged to produce a card themselves for anything else they have found out about.

The idea here is to encourage the sharing of information, the finding of links, formulating questions and building confidence in talking to larger and larger groups.

Meet the Maya: List of information cards so far:

Food and Agriculture

Avocado

Beans

Cassava

Chaya

Chillies

Cocoa

Cotton

Gourds

Maguery

Maize

Sisal

Squash

Vanilla

Technology

Cement

Comal

Jadeite tools

Mano and Metate

Obsidian Tools

Reservoirs Chultunes

Suspension Bridge

Atlatl or Throwing Stick

Rubber Ball

Nah

Paluca

Artefacts

Hunting and Foraging

Armadillo

Bees

Caiman

Deer

Fish

Jaguar

Quetzal Bird

Turkey

Turtle

Geology

Cenote

Asteroid

Cotton



The Maya grow me and use my 'wool' to make cloth.

The women take out the seeds and spin the fibre into threads. They dye the cotton and weave it on a backstrap loom.



Gourds

We are a little bit like squash but you don't eat us. You dry us out and use us as pots or bowls.

The Maya also bore holes in us and use us for sieves. They carve beautiful decorations on us.



Squash

I grow under the maize in the Maya forest gardens. I come in many different shapes, colours and sizes. My big leaves stop the weeds from growing.



Maize

I am the most important food for the Maya. They have a maize god and believe they were made from maize dough. I need a lot of preparation. You have to soak me in lime water and then grind me up to make flour for drink or for tortillas.



Sisal

I am a very useful plant. The Maya use me to make rope, twine, cloth and even paper. I can survive without water for a long time. The Maya need me to make their clothes and houses. They also make rope bridges.



Beans

I have lots of different colours. I am full of protein and help you grow well. The Maya plant me alongside maize and squash. I can grow up the maize stalks.



Cassava

I am a very useful food plant. I am poisonous until you boil me. You can then dry me out and make me into flour for soup or bread. I can grow in a very dry climate. The Maya grew me and now I am eaten all over the world.



Chaya

I am a green vegetable. I grow in the wild. The Maya collect me and also grow me in their gardens. I taste a bit like spinach.



Cocoa Pod



Cocoa Beans

I grow in the rainforest and the Maya look after my trees and plant new ones. They roast my beans to make a chocolate drink. I am a luxury food so many Maya trade the beans in the market place.

Avocado



I grow in the rainforest and the Maya collect my pears for food. They also grow my trees in their forest gardens. They like to eat me with chillies.



Maguey

I am a kind of cactus. I can survive without much water. The Maya drink my sweet sap and also make ropes, thread and twine out of my fibres. They make clothes, bags and straps from these.



Vanilla

I am an orchid. I grow in the rainforest. The Maya use my seed pods to flavour their chocolate drink. One special stingless bee pollinates me. Now I grow all over the world but humans have to do the pollination.



Jaguar

I am the only big cat in America. I live in rainforest and prefer swamps. I have a very, very strong bite. I kill my prey by biting their skulls. The Maya see me as a symbol of power and strength. I keep away from them if I can.



Deer

We are not very big, but the Maya hunt us and sometimes keep us in their villages in pens. Luckily we can run fast. Unluckily we have white tails and the Maya sometimes catch us by throwing spears.



Turtle

The ancient Maya and the Maya nowadays love to catch us and eat us. They also eat our eggs and our babies. Some modern Maya now keep us in ponds and others are breeding us so we do not disappear.



Fish

Here are some of the fish you find in the sea near Yucatan. In the rivers there are many other fish in the rivers and lakes. The Maya ate and still eat a lot of fish.



I am a river fish called a fire mouth. We are often kept as pets.

Quetzal Bird



I live in the rainforest. The Maya are always trying to catch me and my other colourful friends. They use my feathers for head dresses and other decoration.



Armadillo

I live in the rainforest. The Maya are always trying to catch me and turn me into a meal. I am only small, but then the Maya also eat tiny grubs, insects and small snakes.

Turkey



I am the biggest bird in Meso America. I live in the wild and some of us are kept in Maya villages for food and for our decorative feathers.

Caiman



I am a reptile and I live in swamps and rivers. I watch out for the Maya because they try to catch and eat me. They also catch snakes and other reptiles for food.



Comal

I am made of clay and sit on three stones above the fire. You can cook tortillas on me. Another name for me is griddle.

Mano and Metate



We are made from rough stone from a volcano. We are used for grinding seeds or grains into paste or flour. The Maya made us in the shape of a jaguar or other animals.

Tortilla



I am a tortilla. Here the Maya woman is shaping me. She ground the flour on the metate and then I will be put on the comal to be baked. I can then wrap up beans, squash, chaya and chillies

Pottery



I'm a clay pot for cooking or storing food. The Maya made and still make pottery from clay. They love to decorate me and make sculptures out of clay. Here is a jaguar pot.



Obsidian Tools



I am an axe made of obsidian with a wooden handle. I am very hard rock from a volcano. I am harder than steel and can be very sharp. The Maya make knives, arrowheads and cutters from me.

Jadeite tools



I am a digging tool made of jadeite. This is a hard black stone. I am not as hard as obsidian, but I do not splinter. I am also used for weapons. Green jade is a luxury item. The Maya make jewellery from it.

Suspension Bridge



I was a bridge made by the Maya in Yaxchilan in about 750CE. I used to cross the Usumacinta river. I was much longer than any bridge in Europe until 1377CE. My piers were made of stone and my span was made of sisal rope.

Chultunes



I am a storage pit. The Maya dug a big hole and then lined me with stone and cement. I am used to store maize. Chultunes can store water too.



Nah

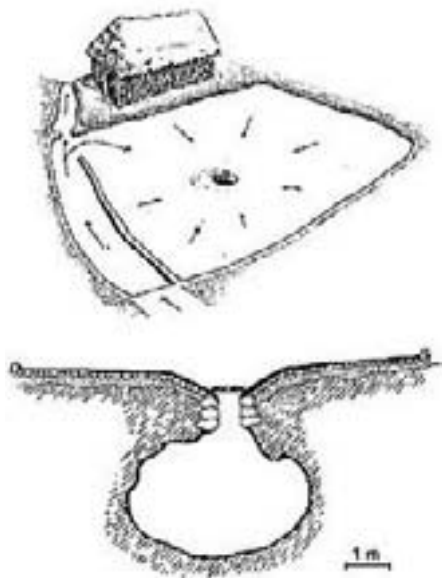
I am a Maya house. I am oval. My base is limestone and my walls are made of sticks and mud. My roof is made of wooden sticks tied together with sisal, maguey and palm fronds.



Palapa

I am the kitchen for a Maya house. I am open on both sides and my roof is made of wooden sticks tied together with sisal and palm fronds. Maya houses are still like the ancient houses.

Reservoir



I am a large hole in the ground. I am made of stone and cement. When it rains I fill up with water. There is no rain for six months in some Maya cities so the farmers can use this water for crops.

Cement



I am cement. I am made from making limestone very hot in a kiln. I bind stones together and line storage pits. The Maya invented me to make sure their temples stayed strong for many years.

Maya Arch



I am an arch in a Maya building. The Maya have cut stones with jadeite tools and fitted them neatly together and joined them with cement. You can find these arches in most Maya cities.

Atlatl or Throwing Stick



I am a stick that helps you throw a spear. I make your arm longer and the spear goes faster: up to 150 kilometres an hour! Maya warriors and hunters could hit their target well with my help.

Rubber Ball



I am a big rubber ball. I am made from latex: the sap of the rubber tree mixed with juice of the morning glory plant. The Maya played serious ball games with me in their ball courts.

Mound



I am a Maya mound. All the Maya cities have mounds. Some of them are just earth, others are covered with limestone. Others have deep caverns inside. Other central American cultures built mounds. You need a lot of people working for a long time to build one by hand.

Stingless Bees



We are bees that live in rainforest in hollow logs. We do not have stings so cannot protect our honey. The Maya collect our honey and some Maya move our log hives near to their houses.

Backstrap Loom



I am a loom for weaving cloth. One end of me is tied to a tree and the other end tied round the waist of my weaver. Maya women do the weaving and make all the clothes.

Breechcloth



All Maya men wore a breechcloth. Important Maya men wore feather head dresses, capes and other colourful clothing. You knew everyone's rank and job by looking at their clothes.

Huipil



Ancient Maya women wore a long huipil and modern Maya women wear shorter ones. I am made of narrow strips of cloth from a backstrap loom. We are often very colourful.

Chillies



We grow in the Maya forest plots. All of us taste hot and some of us are very, very hot. The Maya have always flavoured their food with us. We are now popular all over the world.

Cenote



I am a large hole in the ground full of water. You can find me in the north of Yucatan. There are no rivers here so the Maya take the water out for their crops. Water carriers lift pots of water on their backs up many steps.



Asteroid



I hit the Earth in Yucatan 65 million years ago. There were earthquakes and volcanic eruptions all over the world. Dust and smoke stopped the sun from shining and many plants and animals died. All the dinosaurs disappeared.

Artefacts



We are small carved objects. The ancient Maya made some of us and some were made by modern Maya. Some of us were stolen and some found by archaeologists, some are in museums and some are in tourist shops.