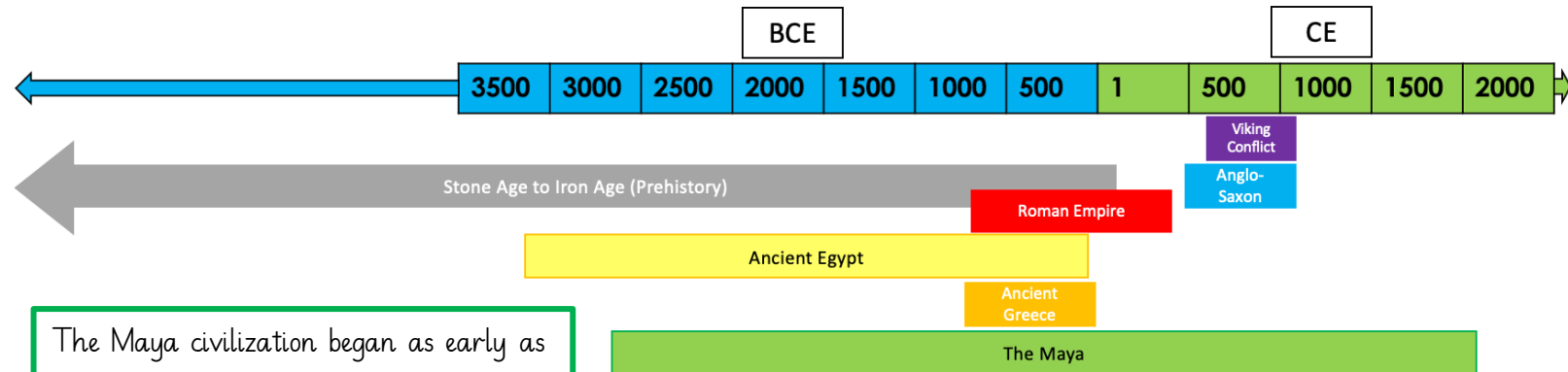


# Year 6 Knowledge Organiser: The Ancient Maya

Vocabulary	
Time period	A block of time that describes a particular era of history.
BCE	BCE is short for Before Common Era. It can be used instead of BC (Before Christ) and stands for the time before year 1.
CE	CE is an abbreviation for Common Era. It means the same as AD (Anno Domini) and represents the time from year 1 and onward.
Mesoamerica	A historical region and cultural area in North America (see map).
Ritual	A sequence of activities performed in a set order and place.
Scribe	A professional person who copied down Mayan writing.
Relic	An object surviving from an earlier time.
Artefact	An object that has a historical or cultural meaning or interest.
Reconstruction	Recreating a historical artefact or monument, ensuring that all historical features are accurate.
Codex/ codices	Folding books made by Maya people, written in Maya hieroglyphic script (symbols and pictures). Codex refers to one book (singular) and codices is more than one (plural).
Monarchy	A form of government where a king or queen is head of state.



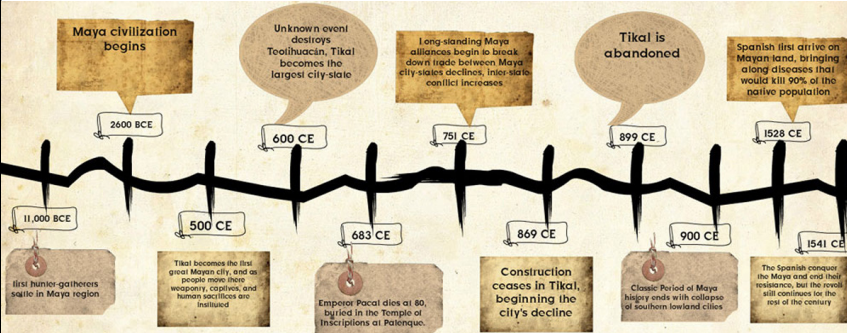
The Maya civilization began as early as 2000 BCE and continued to have a strong presence in Mesoamerica for over 3000 years until the Spanish arrived in 1519 CE.

Historical Enquiry Question:  
What factors helped the Maya become a successful society?

Today, the area the Maya used to live in spreads over 5 countries: Mexico (southern Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula), Belize, Guatemala, a small area of west Honduras and the very north of El Salvador.



The Maya civilization began around 2600 BCE, originating in the Yucatan. For 1200 years the Maya dominated Central America.



Independent Maya civilization continued until 1697 when the Spanish conquered Nojpetén, the last independent city-state.



The Maya calendar is considered the most complex and intricate. It used 20-day months and had two calendar years.

The social structure in the Maya Empire was set. It was very difficult to move upwards. Status was usually hereditary.

**Priests:** The Priests were the most important members of Mayan society. They were bought gifts and other Maya would work for them for free.

**Rulers:** The most important family; they ruled the city and lived a life of luxury. They might lose their place if the city was defeated in a war.

**Nobility:** They might have jobs as military leaders or business leaders. They had servants to work for them. They could read and write.

**Warriors:** Well-respected in society- rank was determined by who their father had been. If captured in war they might become a slave or even be sacrificed!

**Craftsmen:** Created art or ran businesses but could not read or write.

**Farmers:** Lived outside the city and were the biggest group in society. They had very hard lives of manual labour.

**Slaves:** The least important people in society; often captured in war, orphans or rule-breakers. They had no rights and might be used as human sacrifice.

A pyramid diagram with five levels, representing the social hierarchy from top to bottom: Rulers, Nobility, Warriors, Craftsmen, and Farmers. Slaves are shown at the base, outside the pyramid structure.

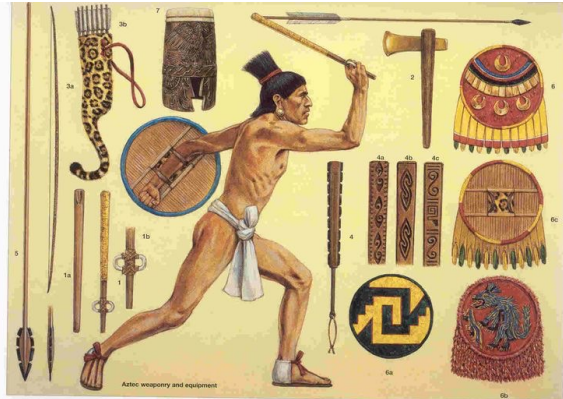
A caste system is a very rigid social system in which you are born into a social position and cannot leave that position.

The Maya civilization stretched from southern Mexico in the north - an area referred to as the lowlands that included a hot coastal plain along the Pacific Ocean and a tropical rainforest in the Yucatan Peninsula - to the highlands of modern-day Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, and Honduras.



A map showing the remains of Chichen Itza, which was s one of the largest Mayan cities ever built.

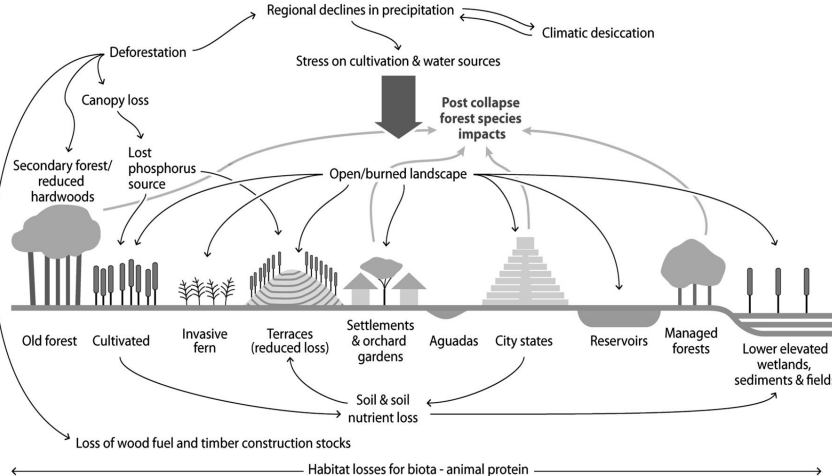
The Mayans built fortifications around some of their cities. Examples of this include Seibal and Tikal. For defence, warriors carried shields and elites and veterans wore thick, cotton armour treated with rock salt that could withstand obsidian.



The Mayans had both long-distance weapons and melee weapons. The long-distance ones included bow and arrow, blowgun, slings and throwing spears.

Pre-Classic	Classic	Post-Classic	Colonial Time
<b>Pre-classic Period</b> (2000BCE to 250CE) The Pre-classic Period covers from the start of the Maya civilization to 250 AD when the Maya civilization began its golden age. A lot of development took place during this period.	<b>Classic Period</b> (250BCE to 900CE) The Classic Period is considered the golden age of the Maya city-states. Most of the cultural achievements of the Maya took place during this period.	<b>Post-classic Period</b> (900BCE to 1500CE) Although the southern city-states collapsed, the Mayan cities in the northern part of the Yucatan Peninsula continued to thrive for the next several hundred years.	<b>Contact Period</b> (1500CE) The Spanish invasion of the Mayan civilisation caused war and unrest. This eventually led to the ruin of the Maya civilisation.

By around 900CE, the Maya cities were mostly deserted; the great Maya cities fell into ruin. Nobody knows where the Maya came from, or what happened to them- it is a mystery!



Mayan decline theories – deforestation / drought / war