



Use this guide to check your knowledge and ensure you haven't missed any great content!

In Cincinnati Museum Center's *Maya: the Exhibition*, you can immerse yourself in the genius of the Maya, an urban civilization that grew from the tropical rainforest. We can marvel at the Maya's language diversity and artistic traditions and how they have endured and live on today – in their inventions that continue to shape our daily lives and in the millions who carry on Maya languages and traditions.

Who are the Maya?

According to Maya belief, the present universe was created in 3114 BCE. Between 1700 BCE and 1300 BCE, the first settlements appeared on the Pacific coast and in the Maya lowlands. The world of the Maya extends over the modern countries of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador.

Check your knowledge!

How many Mayan languages are still spoken today? How many people speak these languages?

Cosmic Balance and Divine Kingship

According to Maya belief, the world we live in was created by gods, whose rules kept social order and who presented role models for human conduct. Each city-state had its own king, called *k'uhul ajaw*, or "Divine King."

- Gods and Goddesses: Most Maya deities had human traits and specific accessories to make them recognizable. Gods were not only physically similar to humans; they also had human emotions.

Check your knowledge!

With which Maya god do the divine kings most often associate themselves? How is this god connected to the story of the Hero Twins?

Cosmic Balance and Divine Kingship (*continued*)

- Maya Ball Game: One game played a part in the cosmic balance of the Maya world and appeared throughout Mesoamerica during the Classic period. Almost every Classic Maya city contained a ball court.

Check your knowledge!

What event does the Maya ball game reenact? How is this game similar to and different from sports and games you play?

- Divine Kingship: Each Maya city-state had its own king, who lived in a palace-temple complex in the kingdom's center city.

Check your knowledge!

What evidence do we have that the ocean was important in Maya cosmology? What were the primary responsibilities of Divine Kings?

Extra Challenge! Are there symbols that your family considers sacred? Are there events or traditions that are significant to your family? How are the leaders of our society similar to and different from Maya kings?

Maya Art

Art flowered during the 700 years of the Maya Classic period. Maya artisans worked in stone, shells, bone, wood, obsidian, jade, silver, clay, stucco, textiles and precious metals. Artists forged gold and silver into jewelry. Maya artists and artisans came from every level of society.

- Paintings: Mesoamerica's humid climate ravaged paints and textiles, but many Maya paintings survived in homes of the elite.

Check your knowledge!

In what ways do paintings help us understand ancient Maya life? How has looting made it difficult for archaeologists to fully understand some paintings?

Maya Art (*continued*)

- Sculpture and Ceramics: For Maya archaeologists, ceramics are an important part of fieldwork. Ceramics preserve well and are found in many households, holding key information like dates and how the objects were used.

Check your knowledge!

Are there other ways that ancient Maya understood sculpture? How did the Maya produce figurines in bulk?

Extra Challenge! What kinds of Maya art-making would you like to try? The Maya used drums, wind instruments and rattles at their celebrations. What instruments are used to make the music that you like to listen to?

Writing, Numbers and Timekeeping

Ancient Maya script is one of the great ancient writing systems, consisting of about 750 glyphs. The Maya were masters of math, and had sophisticated ways to measure time.

- Writing: In the past 30 years, we've been able to decipher Maya hieroglyphs. Maya writing was highly advanced and expressed the complexities of Classic Mayan, the language spoken by nobles and priests.

Check your knowledge!

What discovery was the key to deciphering the ancient Maya writing system? How do pseudoglyphs differ from formal Maya writing?

- Stationery and Codices: The Maya matched their writing tools to their surfaces, inscribing in stone or painting on ceramics and paper. They created accordion-like books on bark paper called codices, but only four remain after Spanish missionaries burned the rest in the mid-1500s CE.

Check your knowledge!

In what ways do archaeologists think different kinds of text might be featured on different types of materials? Why was careful planning required to carve on wooden lintels?

Writing, Numbers and Timekeeping (*continued*)

- Numbers and Timekeeping: The Maya were masters of math, using a base-20 system, with numerals ranging from 0 to 19 that were written with only three signs: a dot for number one, a bar for five and a flower sign for zero. Their early recognition of the principle of zero is remarkable. The Maya used multiple calendars to track time.

Check your knowledge!

How did the Maya use different calendars to track time? Which calendar allows archaeologists to date any event in Maya history to the day?

Extra Challenge! Are there ways that you can share ideas or information beyond talking? Using dots for ones and bars for fives, how might you write your age?