

Name: _____ Date: _____



Write a sentence for each of these titles to describe what Mayan religion was like, then draw a picture for each one.

Gods

Temples

Sacrifice

Ceremonies

Name: _____ Date: _____



Write three facts for each of these titles to describe what Mayan religion was like, then draw a picture for each box.

Gods

Temples

Sacrifice

Ceremonies

Name: _____ Date: _____



Find out as much information as you can about each of these aspects of Mayan religion and make notes in the boxes.

Gods

Temples

Priests

Sacrifices and Offerings

Ceremonies

Afterlife

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Mayan Creation Story

<p>In the beginning there were only two gods. They glittered with blue and green feathers.</p>	<p>They thought of Earth and it was created.</p>	<p>They thought of all the trees, plants, rocks and flowers and they were created.</p>
<p>The gods wanted to make beings who would praise them so they made all the animals.</p>	<p>But the animals couldn't praise them. They could only make animal noises.</p>	<p>The gods decided to make people out of clay but they were too weak and they crumbled.</p>
<p>Next they made people out of wood but they forgot to praise the gods so they were destroyed by a flood.</p>	<p>Finally, the gods made four men out of white maize. The people praised the gods.</p>	<p>The gods were so happy with the men that they made four women for them and the human race began.</p>

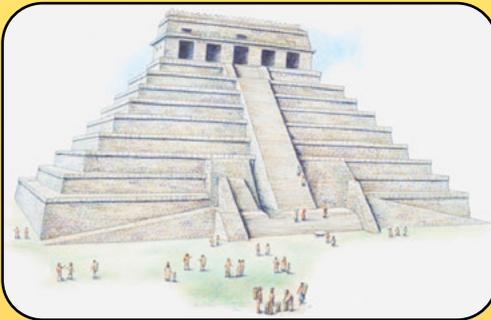
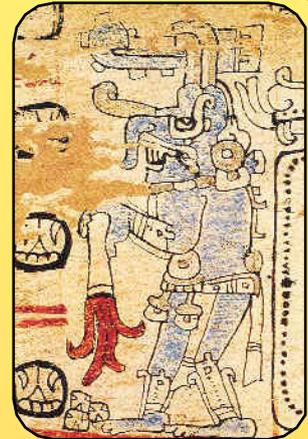
Name: _____ Date: _____

The Mayan Creation Story

Mayan Religion

Religion was very important to the Maya. They believed in lots of different gods who controlled their lives. Each god was in control of a different area of life, such as maize, fire, storms or childbirth.

This picture shows Chac, the god of rain and water.



The Maya worshipped the gods at temples in the cities or in their homes. They had special ceremonies which were run by priests. Every twenty days, people gathered outside the temples to sing, dance, offer sacrifices and pray.

The Maya believed that you had to offer gifts to the gods to keep them happy. They offered food, drink and other gifts, such as flowers or precious stones. These were thrown down holy wells called cenotes for the gods.



Marigolds were often offered to the gods because they were thought to represent the sun.

Being a human sacrifice was considered to be a great honour. People who were sacrificed went straight to heaven.



The Maya also believed that unless they gave blood sacrifices to the gods, the sun would stop rising and the Earth would end. They would offer human and animal sacrifices by pulling out hearts. They also made themselves (or captives) bleed by pulling out their fingernails or drawing spiky ropes through their tongues.

Temples were not just places of worship but were also tombs. Mayan leaders were buried in the pyramids. They were often buried with many objects or with sacrificed animals or slaves. This might have been to help them journey through the underworld to reach heaven.

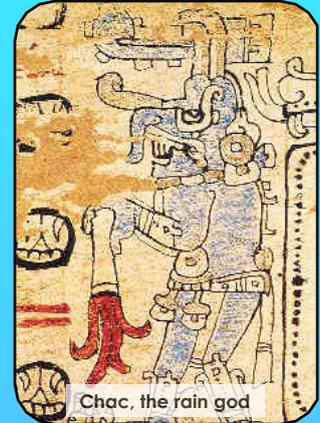


Mayan rulers wore masks when they died to help them become gods in the afterlife.

Mayan Religion

What did the Maya believe?

The Maya believed in many different gods who each had control over a different aspect of life, such as the gods of rain, maize, childbirth, bees, wine, games and fire. These gods could control human events and change fates. As such, people consulted the gods on everything they did and prayed for help in their lives.



Chac, the rain god



A Mayan temple

How did the Maya worship?

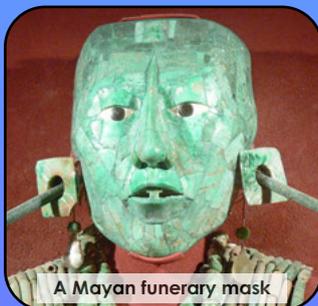
The Maya worshipped the gods in lots of different ways. They had special festivals run by the temple priests every twenty days where people would meet outside the temple to sing, dance and pray. The priests would wear large headdresses and scary masks to frighten any demons away. People also gave offerings and sacrifices of food, drink, flowers, precious objects and blood to the gods to keep them happy. They threw these offerings into a holy well called a cenote.

Why did the Maya offer blood to the gods?

The Maya believed that unless they offered blood to the gods, the sun would stop rising every day and the world would end. Sometimes this meant offering a human sacrifice. Humans sacrifices could be men, women or children. Slaves and captives often had their hearts cut out or their fingernails pulled off. However, it was the richer Mayans who had more of a responsibility to give the gods blood. They would do this by pricking themselves with cactus thorns or by pulling a barbed rope through their tongues.



A human sacrifice



A Mayan funerary mask

What were Mayan temples like?

Mayan temples were pyramids. They were tall so that the tops were closer to heaven. Temples were the domains of the priests who would perform ceremonies in small, dark rooms. However, temples were also tombs. Mayan leaders would often have temples built as their burial ground. They would be buried with precious objects and human or animal sacrifices. They also wore special masks and jewellery that was thought to help them become gods in the afterlife.

What did Maya believe happened when you died?

The Maya believed that there was an underworld and a heaven. There were different levels of the underworld and different levels of heaven. The Maya believed that most people, including kings, nobles and priests, had to journey through the underworld to reach heaven and live with the gods. The underworld was a dark and terrifying place with frightening gods, scary demons and rivers of blood. The only people who went straight to heaven were those who had been sacrificed, those who died in childbirth or battle, and those who died playing a religious ball game called Pok-a-Tok.



THE MAYAN CREATION STORY

In the beginning of the world there were only two gods. These gods were called Gucumatz and Tepeu and they glittered with blue and green feathers. The two gods decided that they would create the Earth. They thought of the Earth and it was created. They thought of the trees, mountains, valleys and cliffs and they were created. They thought of grass, flowers, fields and forests and they were created.

When they had created the world, they said to each other, 'Look at this amazing world we have made. We need beings who will take care of the Earth and who will praise us for what we have created.' So they made the animals. They made jaguars, panthers, snakes and deer. They made dogs, turkeys, parrots, fish and all the other animals that are in the world today.

But the animals could not praise Gucumatz and Tepeu. They could only bark or growl or bleat. They tried as hard as they could but the meows and twitters and roars became so loud that the gods told them to stop. 'What a racket! We need better beings who will be able to say our names to praise us instead of just making noise,' they said.

They decided to make people out of mud but they were weak. They couldn't stand up and soon crumbled and died. They tried again, this time using wood and rushes to make people, but these people had nothing in their minds or hearts. They soon forgot to worship the gods and were destroyed by a great flood. The few people who survived became the monkeys who live in the trees. Gucumatz and Tepeu left them there as warnings of what happens when the gods are not worshipped.

One day, the animals brought the gods a sack of white maize. The gods ground this into a paste and made four men. The four men immediately starting praising Gucumatz and Tepeu. The gods knew that these men had hearts full of emotion and heads full of questions. They were so pleased with the men they had made that they created four women for the men. This is how the human race began.