

Key Vocabulary

civilisation	A human society with well-developed rules and government, often where technology and the arts are considered important.
drought	A long period of time with little or no rain.
jaguar	A big cat, heavier than a leopard, with yellowish fur and black spots.
scribes	People trained to write things down, either as an official record or for someone else unable to write.
codices	Ancient handwritten texts. Maya codices could be unfolded like a concertina. One text is called a codex.
maize	Another word for sweetcorn or corn on the cob. It can be made into a dough and baked into tortillas.
cacao beans	Cacao trees sprout pods directly from their trunks. When they are ripe, the pods can be broken open to reveal the beans, which can then be dried, roasted and ground.

Maya Numbers

The Maya developed an advanced number system for their time.

They were one of only two cultures in the world to develop the concept



=0 of zero as a placeholder.



=1 The number system used



=5 three symbols in different combinations.



The Maya built cities, pyramids and ornate sculptures in the rainforest.

Food

The Maya people mainly ate **maize** (corn). **Maize** was very important to them as they believed that the first humans were made from **maize** dough by the gods.

The Maya made a bitter chocolatey drink from **cacao beans** that was enjoyed by the rich. It was used for medicines and in ceremonies. The **cacao beans** were highly valued and even used as a form of money.



Writing

The Maya writing system was used to write several different Maya languages. It was made up of many symbols called glyphs.

Logograms are glyphs representing whole words.

Syllabograms are glyphs representing units of sound (syllables).

The glyphs were carved on stone buildings and monuments and painted on pottery.

Maya **scribes** also wrote books called **codices**.

