

## Year 5 Knowledge organiser - Mayan Civilization

### Key questions:

- Why do we study the Ancient Maya?
- How did the Mayan Empire grow to become so powerful?
- How different was life for the rich and poor in the Mayan Empire?
- How can we really know what life was like in Central America 1000 years ago?
- Why did the Mayans believe in human and animal sacrifice?
- What can we learn about the Maya from a Spanish soldier?
- Why did the Mayan Empire decline?

### Essential Learning

- The Mayans were one of the great civilizations of the Americas.
- The Mayans settled in Mexico but were spread across a number of city states that were independent and ruled separately.
- The Mayan civilization were highly developed with regards to Mathematics (using a base twenty number system), a writing system, astronomy and had an advanced architecture.
- Farming allowed larger settlements but deforestation and erosion of the land and a period of land drought started their decline.
- The civilization was organised into city states which had their own kings. The kings were in complete control and had nobles to help them - absolute monarchy.
  - The Mayans lived in houses made of wood, thatch, vine, reed and 'wattle and daub' which were usually composed of a single rectangular room.
  - The Mayan diet was based on corn and beans but this was generally supplemented with vegetables, squash, chilli, avocado and other fruits, and, on special days, with meat from turkeys, dogs, armadillos, deer, iguanas, turtles, and fish.
  - The Mayan civilization declined due to famine, epidemics and droughts which caused issues with the farming land (no one knows fully what happened).

### Key Vocabulary

**Civilisation** – the stage of human social and cultural development and organisation that is considered most advanced.

**Empire** – an extensive group of states or countries ruled over by a single monarch.

**Monarchy** – a form of government with a monarch (usually a king or queen) at the head.

**Hierarchy** – a system in which members of an organisation or society are ranked according to relative status or authority.

**Evidence** – the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid.

**Interpretation** – the action of explaining the meaning of something

**Significance** – the meaning to be found in words or events.

**City state** - a city that with its surrounding territory forms an independent state.



