

Lesson 3: Maya or Myth?

In this lesson, students learn about the ancient Maya world by determining if statements about the Maya culture, traditions, and beliefs are true or false.

This lesson features topics from the **LEARN** book and quizzes that are part of the **Mayan Mysteries** game. To learn more about the game, visit www.dig-itgames.com.

Objectives:

- Understand how differences in social status manifest and affect daily life
- Understand how beliefs are transmitted and reinforced in a society
- Understand Maya political organization
- Understand the Maya belief system
- Understand the roles of trade, alliance, and warfare in Maya culture

Materials: The *Maya or Myth?* student [activity sheet](#)

Time Required: 30 minutes

Directions:

1. To help students understand beliefs, rituals, and aspects of daily life in Maya culture, they will complete a quiz. Use the quiz to launch your Maya unit, to prompt discussion, or to wrap up your unit.
2. Distribute the *Maya or Myth?* student activity sheet and review the page with students. Students can work independently or in teams to complete the page.
3. Review the answers as a class. Ask students if any of the facts surprised them and why.
4. As a follow-up, have students research additional facts to create their own quizzes about the Maya civilization. Students can use facts presented in the **Mayan Mysteries** game to add to their quizzes.

Answers:

[1] The Maya believed people were created from maize. [Answer: True]

[2] People living in different Maya cities all spoke the same language. [Answer: False]

[3] The Maya civilization extended from Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula to Panama. [Answer: False. Maya civilization in Mesoamerica includes parts of Mexico (Yucatán Peninsula), Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.]

[4] The Maya used wooden boards to elongate infants' heads. [Answer: True]

[5] The Maya used looms to weave their own clothing. [Answer: True]

[6] The Maya put gold fillings in their teeth. [Answer: False. The Maya used jade, pyrite, hematite, or turquoise.]

[7] Cacao beans were used to make jewelry. [Answer: False. Cacao beans were used as currency.]

[8] The Maya believed the number 13 was very unlucky. [Answer: False. The number 13 was considered a sacred number.]

[9] The Maya sutured wounds with human hair. [Answer: True]

[10] The first Maya settlements are about 1,000 years old. [Answer: False. The first Maya settlements are more than 1,000 years old.]

[11] The Maya built stone columns called stelae to ward off evil spirits. [Answer: False. The stelae were used to record religious dates, chart family trees, glorify rulers, and chronicle wars.]

[12] In some parts of the Maya civilization, a sacred cenote was a

sinkhole used for sacrifices. [Answer: True]

[13] The Maya deposited the bones of hunted animals in sacred caves. [Answer: True]

[14] The ancient Maya practiced bloodletting because they thought it cleansed their bodies. [Answer: False. Bloodletting was done to please the gods, celebrate events, and maintain power.]

[15] Players in the Maya ball game couldn't touch the ball with their hands or feet. [Answer: True]