



# The Mayan People

# The Mayan People

- **Main Idea (objective):**



- The Maya adjusted to life in the tropical rain forest and built a culture based on their religious beliefs.

# The Mayan People

## ○ Lecture Focus Essential Question):



- What would it be like to live in a jungle? What resources would be easy to find? Lets learn how the Maya adapted to life in the jungles of Mesoamerica.

# The Mayan People

- In 1839 C.E. an American lawyer named John Lloyd Stephens and an English artist named Frederick Catherwood slashed their way into the Yucatan rain forest.



- There they made an amazing discovery, vine covered ruins of an ancient city.

# The Mayan People

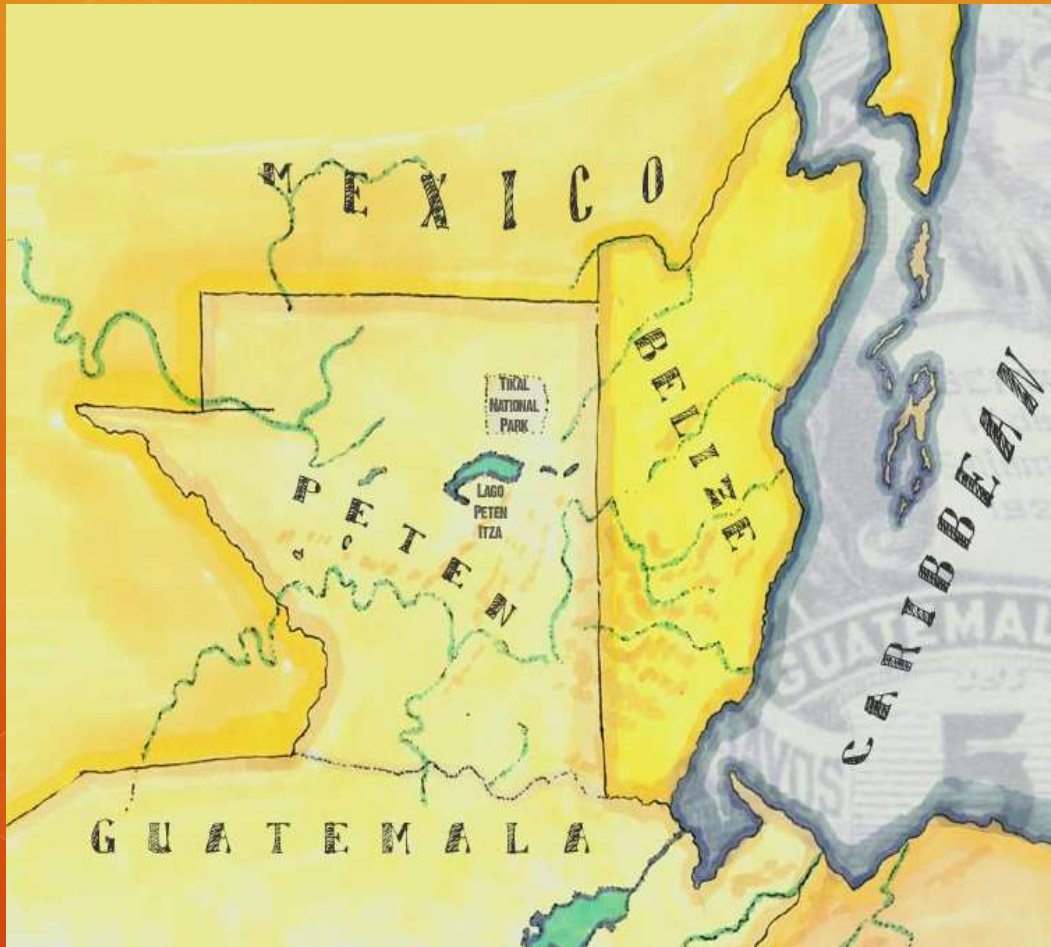
- Stevens and Catherwood soon learned that the people who built the city were called the **Maya**.



- The **Maya** were the ancestors of the millions of people who still live in present day Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Belize.

# Mayan City States

- At first glance, it looked like the Mayan had settled in one of the worst spots on Earth.



- They established their empire in the **Peten Basin**, the Mayan word for "**Flat Region.**"

# Mayan City States

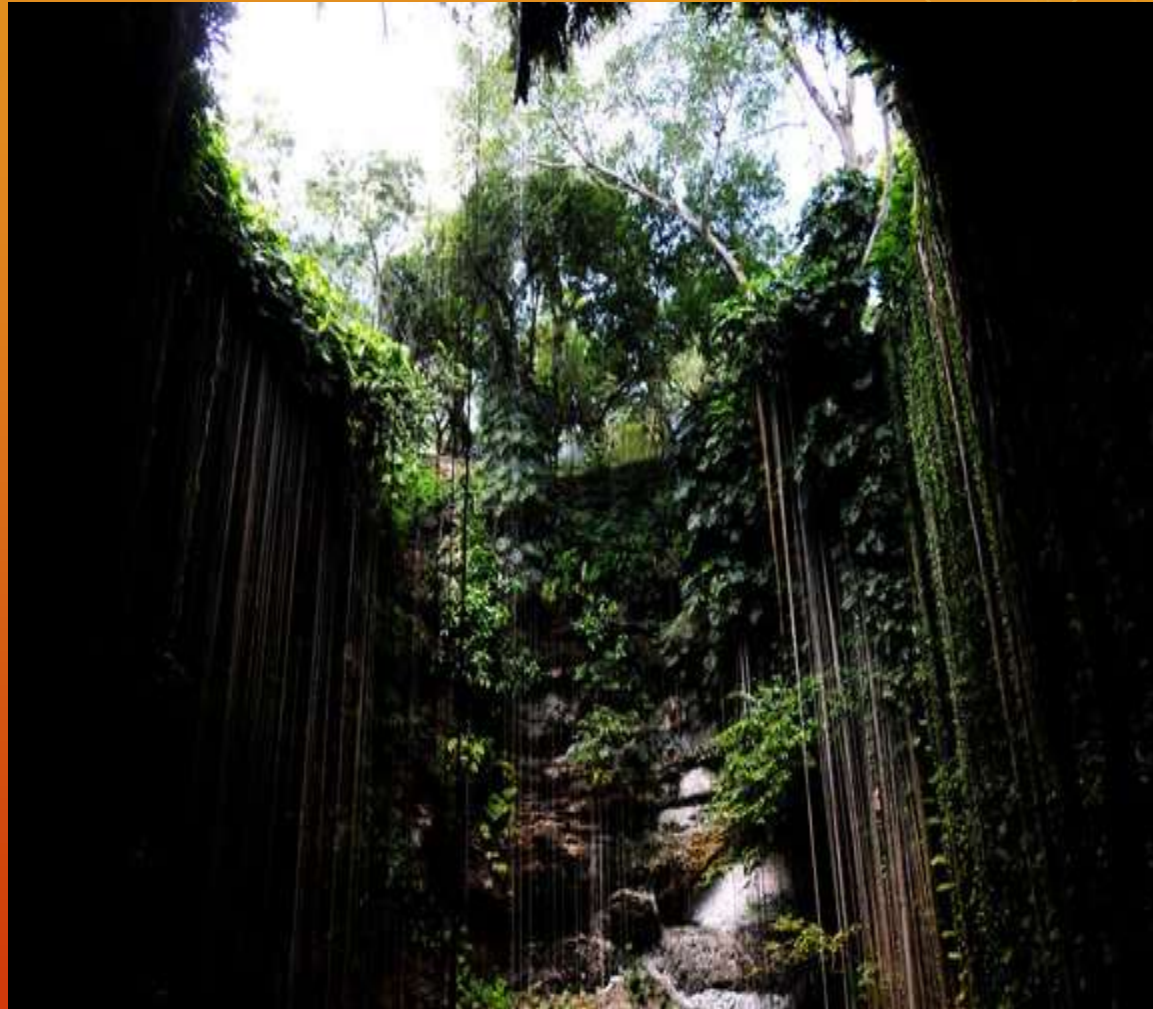
- Located in present day Guatemala, the **Peten Basin's** dense forest nearly blocked out the sun.



- Stinging insects filled the air, poisonous snakes slithered on the ground, monkeys and parrots screeched in the treetops...even so, the Mayan thrived.

# Mayan City States

- The Mayan saw what others missed.



- Swamps and sinkholes gave them a year round source of water.



# Mayan City States

- The sinkholes, which are areas where the Earth has collapsed, connected the Mayan with a huge system of under ground rivers and streams.



- These sinkholes really served as enormous Mayan wells.

# Mayan City States



# Mayan City States



# Mayan City States



- After rumbling for weeks, part of a poor Guatemala City neighborhood plummeted some 30 stories into the Earth in 2007

# Mayan City States



- Sinkhole in Guatemala City, Guatemala 2012

# Mayan City States

- Even with a ready water supply, only an organized culture could have succeeded in building cities and fields in the Peten Basin.



- The effort required cooperation among many people, which could only be accomplished by having an organized government.

# Mayan City States

- The Mayan set up city states.



- Within each city state, rulers supplied leadership, a strong military force and men for grand building projects.

# Mayan City States



- Leadership passed from one king to the next, and city states often fought with each other for power and land.



# Mayan City States

- **Questions:**

- 1) What was the name of the Basin where the Mayan settled?
- 2) What types of animals could be found in this basin?
- 3) What were sinkholes used for during the Mayan era?
- 4) How was the Mayan government set up?

# Mayan City States

- **Questions:**

- 1) What was the name of the Basin where the Mayan settled?

- **Peten Basin, present day Guatemala**

- 2) What types of animals could be found in this basin?

- **Snakes, stinging insects, parrots, jungle cats and monkeys**

- 3) What were sinkholes used for during the Mayan era?

- **Fresh drinking water**

- 4) How was the Mayan government set up?

- **Kings ruled city-states**

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- The rulers of Mayan city-states said that they were descended from the Sun.



- They claimed the right to rule as god-kings and expected every person to serve them in many different ways, including building huge monuments to honor them.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- As god-kings, Mayan rulers taught their subjects how to gratify the gods.



- One way the Mayan pleased the gods was through human sacrifice.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- The Maya believed that the gods gave their life-giving fluid, **rain**, to keep humans healthy and strong.



- Humans were expected to keep the gods strong by giving their own life-giving fluid as sacrifice, **blood**.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- When the Maya marched into battle, they wanted captives more than they wanted land.
- During times of drought, Mayan priest offered the captives to **Chaac**, the god of rain and sunlight.



*Effigy seen in the form of  
Chaac, the Rain God  
Maya, Guatemala, Late Postclassic  
1200-1500 AD*

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- **Chaac** is a benevolent fertility god and god of agriculture, rain and lightning.



- He may be represented as an old man with reptilian features...he is connected with the Aztec god Tlaloc.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- The Maya typically only sacrificed captives from a ruling group of a conquered society.



- Most captives were kept enslaved and put to work, however, some were put to death to honor the Mayan gods.



# Life in the Mayan Cities

- The Maya believed that the gods controlled everything that happened on Earth.



- As a result, religion was at the core of the Mayan Life.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- Huge pyramids with a temple at the top towered over Mayan cities.



- Priest, who claimed to know what the gods wanted, set up a strict class system in which every person had a specific ordered place.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- Royal Mayan women often married into royal families in distant Mayan city-states.
- This practice strengthened trade and bonds of loyalty.



# Life in the Mayan Cities

- These marriages helped form **alliances** between Mayan cities.



- **Alliance** - A relationship based on similar interests that allow people or states to work together comfortably.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- Women played a large role in the Mayan city-states.



- In one Mayan carving, a woman is seen wearing a war headdress and is riding atop a platform carried by soldiers.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- In the city-state of Calakmul, at least two women served as all-powerful queens.



- Calakmul has long been one of the most diplomatic of Maya territories, maintaining allies within many of the other nations.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

## ○ **Mayan Gods:**



- **Ah Puch** – Ah Puch is the god of death and is depicted as a skeleton with corpses and skulls around him...he is also shown with black spots.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- **Kinich Ahau**: is a Maya sun god.



- **Kinich Ahau** is shown as a toothless old man, or with one tooth in his lower jaw...he never appears with symbols of death.



# Life in the Mayan Cities

- **Kukulcan**: The Aztec knew **Kukulcan** as **Quetzalcoatl** ("feathered snake")... shown as a serpent and hero-god, he taught the Maya about civilization and was associated with rain.



- He was also associated with the four elements, the colors yellow, red, black, and white, and good and evil...worship included human sacrifice.

# Life in the Mayan Cities



# Life in the Mayan Cities

- **Ix Chel:** is a rainbow, earth, and moon goddess of the Maya.



- Ix is a feminine prefix.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- **Ix Tab:** or “Rope Woman” is the Maya goddess of the hanged and suicide.



- She is depicted with a rope around her neck.

# Life in the Mayan Cities

## ○ Questions:

- 1) Who were the Mayan descended from?
- 2) What was the life giving fluid of the Mayan Gods? What was the life giving fluid of the Mayans?
- 3) When the Mayan went into battle what did they desire more then land?
- 4) What is an alliance and how was it used during the Mayan Empire?

# Life in the Mayan Cities

- **Questions:**

- 1) Who were the Mayan descended from?

- **The Sun**

- 2) What was the life giving fluid of the Mayan Gods? What was the life giving fluid of the Mayans?

- **Rain and Blood**

- 3) When the Mayan went into battle what did they desire more than land?

- **Captives**

- 4) What is an alliance and how was it used during the Mayan Empire?

**Agreement based on similar interest, used to connect many different city states.**

# Mayan Science and Writing

- Both queens and kings turned to Mayan Priest for advice.



- The Priest thought gods reveled their plans through the movements of the sun, moon and stars, so they studied the heavens and skies very closely.

# Mayan Science and Writing

- The Mayan also needed to know when to plant their crops.



- By watching the sky, the priest began to learn and understand about what we know today as **Astronomy**.





# Mayan Science and Writing





- In order to chart the passage of time, the Mayan actually developed a system of mathematics.



- They actually invented a method of counting based on 20.

# Mayan Science and Writing

- The Mayan civilization's mathematics were one of the most advanced of the ancient Americas, rather than using a base 10 system as we use (1, 10, 100, 1,000, etc.) they used a base 20 system (1, 20, 400, 8,000, etc.)

0	1	2	3	4
	•	••	•••	••••
5	6	7	8	9
	•	••	•••	••••
10	11	12	13	14
	•	••	•••	••••
15	16	17	18	19
	•	••	•••	••••



- One of the most fascinating facts about their mathematical system was that their counting system used only 3 symbols – a “shell”, dot, and line. The shell represented 0, the dot represented 1, and the line represented 5.

# Mayan Science and Writing

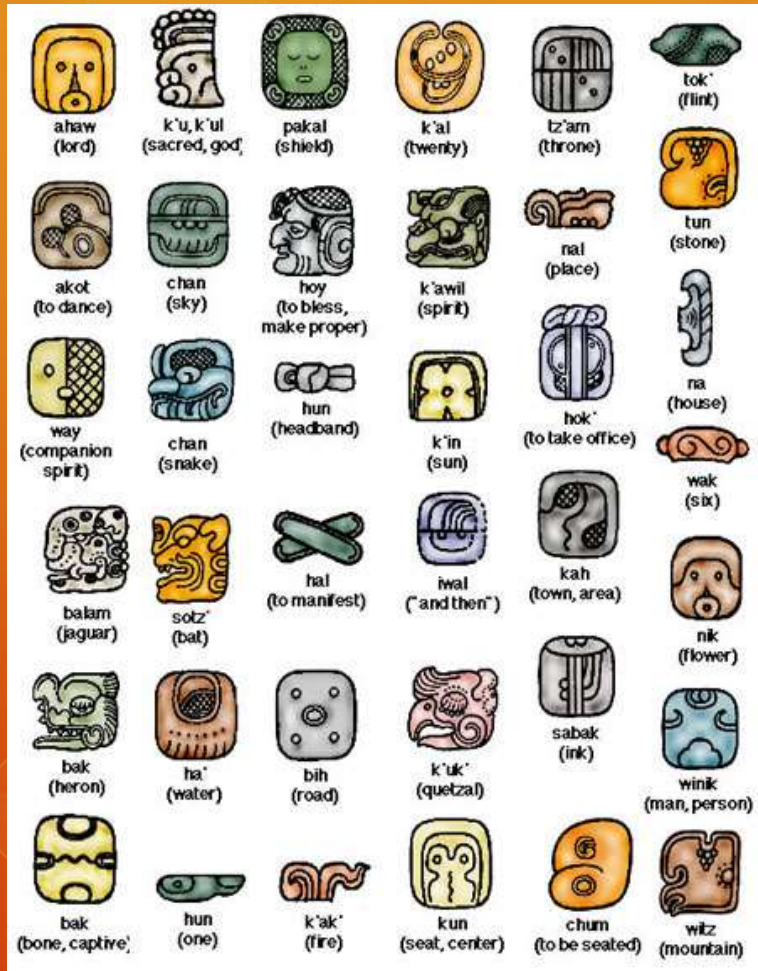
- Also of note is that they were one of the earliest civilizations anywhere in the world to have the concept of zero.



- While other civilizations had this concept, since none of them interacted with the Mayans it can be said that they Mayans came up with this idea independently (as did the other societies).

# Mayan Science and Writing

- The Maya also invented a written language to record numbers and dates.



- Like the Egyptians, the Maya used a system of Hieroglyphics, where symbols represented sounds, words or ideas.

# Mayan Science and Writing

- Only nobles could read them however.



- After the collapse of the Mayan civilization, nobody could read these Hieroglyphics at all...only recently have scholars begun to unlock the stories told in these characters.

# Mayan Science and Writing

## ○ Questions:

- 1) What did priest learn by watching the sky?
- 2) What type of number system did the Mayan's create?
- 3) How were hieroglyphics used?

# Mayan Science and Writing

- **Questions:**

- 1) What did priest learn by watching the sky?

- **They created a system of astronomy**

- 2) What type of number system did the Mayan's create?

- **Numbers were written with dot's and line's**

- 3) How were hieroglyphics used?

- **Symbols represented sounds, words and ideas**



# Mayan Science and Writing

- **Reading Check:**

- List five **advantages** of living in a tropical rainforest and five **disadvantages** of living in a tropical rainforest.

# Time Traveler



○ Time Travel Time!!!!

# Time Traveler

- **The History of Chocolate** began in Mesoamerica.
- Chocolate is the fermented, roasted, and ground beans of the **Theobroma Cacao**.
- Chocolate can be traced to the Mokaya and other pre-Olmec people, with evidence of cacao beverages dating back to 1900 B.C.E.



# Time Traveler

- Chocolate played a special role in both Maya and Aztec royal and religious events...
- Priests presented cacao seeds as offerings to the gods and served chocolate drinks during sacred ceremonies.



# Time Traveler

- Chocolate was popular with all aspects of the Mayan civilization.



- From common people to royalty, they drank it at nearly every meal.

# Time Traveler

- The Mayan poured it from spouted vessels known as chocolate pots.



- The Mayan served a very thick chocolate with foam on the top, which contained such ingredients as honey, chili, corn and water.

# Time Traveler



- In keeping respect for chocolate, botanists gave the cacao tree, where chocolate comes from, the name "**Theobroma Cacao**", "**Food of the Gods.**"

# Sports and Contests





# Sports and Contests

- Mayan Cities had many ball courts.



- In a Mayan ball game, teams of two or three players tried to drive a hard rubber ball through a decorated stone ring.

# Sports and Contests



- Players wore helmets, gloves, knee and hip guards made of animal hide to protect themselves against the hard rubber balls.

# Sports and Contests



- They were not allowed to use their hands or feet to throw the ball, they had to use their hips to drive the ball through the stone rings.

# Sports and Contests

- The stone rings were placed 27 feet above the ground on a large rectangular field, players had to have incredible skill to score a goal.



- Making a goal was so rare that when a player scored the crowd rewarded the hero with clothing and jewelry.

# Sports and Contests

- Some scholars think that the Mayan ball game was more than a sport or contest.



- It had a religious and symbolic meaning as well...the losing team was sacrificed to the gods in a ceremony after the game.

# Sports and Contests

## ○ Questions:

- 1) How did a player score in the Mayan Ball Game? What did they have to use?
- 2) Why was the losing of a game especially painful for a team?

# Sports and Contests

- **Questions:**

- 1) How did a player score in the Mayan Ball Game?

- **Use their hips to strike the ball into rings 27 feet high**

- 2) Why was the losing of a game especially painful for a team?

- **They were sacrificed to the gods**

# Chichen Itza

- **Chichen Itza** was one of the greatest Mayan centers of the Peninsula of Yucatan.



- Throughout its nearly 1,000 years history, different peoples have left their mark on this city, the Maya and Toltec vision of the world and the universe is revealed in their artistic works and stone monuments.



# Chichen Itza



# Chichen Itza

- Several buildings have survived and are visited by millions of people each year.



- In the northern region of the Yucatan peninsula, on a limestone plateau lie the relics of Chichen Itza, once one of the most powerful cities of the Maya.

# Chichen Itza



○ **The Temple, 1892**

# Chichen Itza



- Ruins of the temples of this ancient civilization spread from the Guatemala jungles to the Yucatan.

# Chichen Itza

- Mexican archaeologists discovered the hidden chamber during restoration of El Castillo in the 1920s and 1930s.



- Knowing that the Maya frequently built temples on top of existing structures, the archaeologists dug into the south side of the pyramid and encountered the side of an older pyramid where they found, in the center of a chamber, a perfectly preserved **Chac Mool Statue**.

# Chichen Itza



- The excavation also revealed another chamber beyond the first, and in the center archaeologists discovered the red Jaguar Throne.

# Chichen Itza



# Chichen Itza

- The **Tzompantli**, or **Skull Platform**



- This Skull Rack is a type of alter documented in several Mesoamerican civilizations, which was used for the public display of human skulls, typically those of war captives or other sacrificial victims.



# Chichen Itza



○ Templo de los Guerreros (**Temple of the Warriors**)

# Chichen Itza



# Chichen Itza

- **Las Monjas** is one of the more notable structures at Chichen Itza.



- The Spanish named this complex **Las Monjas** "The Nuns" or "The Nunnery" but it was actually a government palace.

# Chichen Itza



# Chichen Itza

- **El Caracol** "The Snail" is located to the north of **Las Monjas** and is a round building on a large square platform.

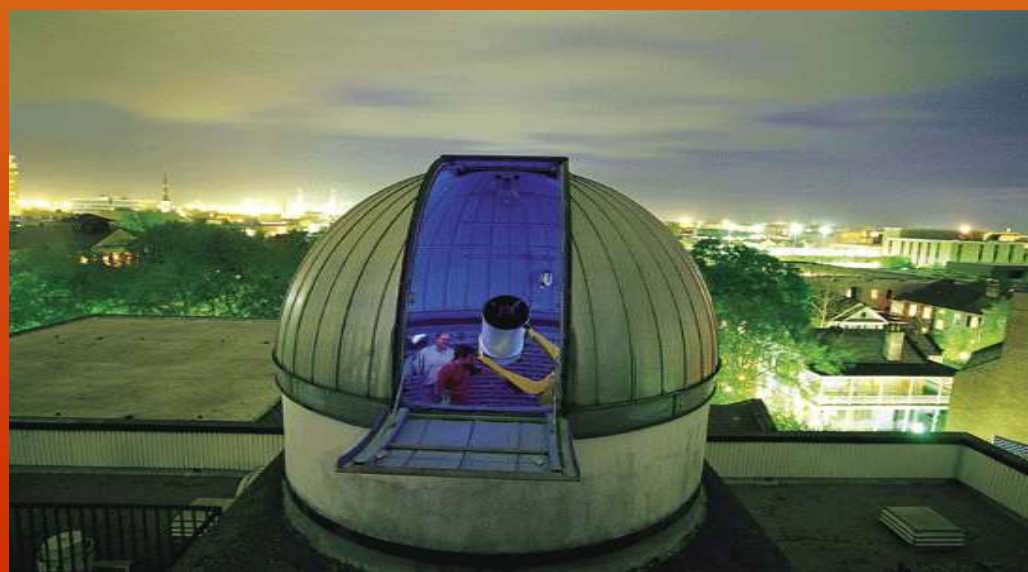


- It gets its name from the stone spiral staircase inside... it was used as an observatory with doors and windows aligned to astronomical events, specifically around the path of Venus and the sun.

# Chichen Itza



# Chichen Itza



# Chichen Itza





# History Tragedy Time!



○ History Tragedy Time!

# Ancient Maya Pyramid Destroyed in Belize

- Despite its small size, the Caribbean country of Belize is known for a few outstanding characteristics: a spectacular barrier reef, a teeming rain forest, and extensive Maya ruins.



- It now has one fewer of those ruins in 2013

# Ancient Maya Pyramid Destroyed in Belize

- A construction company in Belize has been scooping stone out of the major pyramid at the site of Nohmul (meaning Big Mound), one of only 15 ancient Maya sites important enough to be noted on the National Geographic World Atlas.



- The National Institute of Culture and History of Belize had earlier noted that "the site continues to be destroyed by road construction crews who bulldoze the mounds for gravel."

# Ancient Maya Pyramid Destroyed in Belize

- It appears that nearly the entire main pyramid, once standing over 60 feet tall, has been destroyed by road building crews.
- All of Belize's ancient Maya sites are protected by law, the Institute of Archaeology plans to investigate the destruction and take those responsible to court.



# Ancient Maya Pyramid Destroyed in Belize

- Though the site of Nohmul had not yet been developed for tourism, it had been excavated off and on since the early 1900s after first being recorded as a site in 1897.



- The site lies on private land, and there has been a lot of other activity in the area, including the burning of cane fields, which could be why the backhoes weren't detected sooner.

# Ancient Maya Pyramid Destroyed in Belize

## ○ **Open Ended Response:**

- In a well written, two paragraph response answer the following question.
- Think about the tragedy that has occurred with the destruction of this Mayan Temple. This is a piece of history that we as young historians could have learned from and now it is gone forever.
- Why is it important to preserve history for future generations to come? What can be gained from studying these ancient cultures?