

Mayan Calendar

Name _____

The Maya were an indigenous people who lived throughout Mexico and Central America from about 800 B.C. to 1100 A.D. The Mayan society was thought to be the most complex and sophisticated in the world at the time. The Maya were responsible for incredible achievements in astronomy, agriculture, math, engineering and technology. Although there are several theories on why they eventually faded into history, historians and archaeologists still have not come to a consensus.

Calendars

Among the most notable of Maya achievements were its calendars. The Calendar Round was a 52-year system that tracked time in two overlapping cycles. The first cycle, called Tzolk'in, was a religious cycle in which 20 day-names were combined with the numbers 1-13, to give each of the 260 resulting days a unique identifier.

The second system, called the Haab', was a 365-day long solar cycle. The Haab' had eighteen 20-day months, and one five-day month. The five-day month was called a "wayeb."

Every day had a day number and name in the Tzolk'in and a day and month name in the Haab'. After 52 years, both the Tzolk'in and the Haab' reset on the same day. Because the calendar reset itself after 52 years, it proved impossible to record history and events chronologically.

The Long Count

In order to assign events to a specific date in time, the Maya developed the Long Count calendar. The Long Count calendar measured time from the distant past. Scientists believe the start date was August 11 of the year 3,114 B.C. It lasted 1,872,000 days and ended on December 21, 2012 - which some people took to mean as a Mayan prophecy predicting the end of the world. The Long Count calendar was divided into cycles. It was similar to our current calendar, although its days were grouped into the following cycles based on the number 20: kin (one day), winal (20 days), tun (360 days), k'atun (720 days), and baktun (144,000 days). The base-20 system used by the Maya was called the vigesimal system.

- 1. What was the major difference between Tzolk'in and the Haab'?**
 - A. The Haab' had less days than Tzolk'in
 - B. The Tzolk'in was a religious cycle and the Haab' was a solar cycle.
 - C. The Tzolk'in had five leftover days called a "wayeb."
 - D. Only the Haab' reset itself after 52 years

- 2. Which of the following best describes the Haab'?**
- A. A solar calendar system with 260 days
 - B. A religious calendar system with 260 days
 - C. A solar calendar system with 18 months and 365 total days
 - D. A religious calendar with 18 months and 365 total days
- 3. What was the disadvantage of the Calendar Round?**
- A. It could only track religious events
 - B. It could assign specific events to specific dates
 - C. One of the cycles resulted in five left-over days
 - D. One of the cycles only tracked 260 days
- 4. To which of the following questions would “December 21, 2012” be the answer?**
- A. When did the The Long Count reset?
 - B. When did the Calendar Round reset?
 - C. When did the first baktun end?
 - D. When did the Long Count end?
- 5. Which of the following best describes the first paragraph?**
- A. A basic introduction to the Maya
 - B. A detailed introduction to the Maya
 - C. An introduction to the Mayan calendars
 - D. A detailed history of the Maya
- 6. What does “consensus” mean in the following sentence?**

Although there are several theories on why they eventually faded into history, historians and archaeologists still have not come to a consensus.

- A. agreement
 - B. sharing
 - C. controversy
 - D. history
- 7. What question is not answered in the passage?**
- A. What was the base-20 system used by the Maya called?
 - B. Why did the Maya invent the Long Count calendar?
 - C. When did the Long Count calendar start?
 - D. What happened during the “wayeb”?