

Maya Archaeo-Box (HI00546)

Transport your class back to the classic period of the Maya Empire with this authentic collection of replica resources. Use the artefacts to create a hands-on enquiry or recreate an archaeological dig! The items can support the teaching of topics across the curriculum in History, Geography, RE and Art.



Contents: -

1. 1 x Mayan Pot
2. 1 x Clay Incense Burner
3. 1 x Set of Cacao Beans
4. 1 x Mayan Glyph Painted onto Handmade Paper
5. 1 x Mini Metate
6. 1 x Mayan Copal Incense
7. 1 x Mayan Plaque
8. 1 x Mayan Ceramic Stamp
9. 1 x Archaeology CD (not shown in picture)

Please note contents and designs may vary

Questions you could ask children about the artefacts

Initial Discussion

- What is this object?
- Does it resemble anything the children have seen?
- What do you think the item was used for and by whom?
- Does anyone know what it is called?

Collect any other questions the children might have about the artefacts and display them as you try to find the answers through your learning sessions.

Other questions to consider:

- Where does the object come from?
- Who might have made this object? And how were they made?
- Why were they made?
- **What do the objects tell us about Mayan culture and life?** *This last question can be returned to at the end of the investigation.*

All About the Artefacts

1. Mayan Pot

This pot is a reproduction of ancient Mayan pottery urns. It features intricate small mask detailing. The pots would have been made by hand.

Design and make a small clay pot.

2. Clay Incense Burner

Made of clay and used to burn incense for religious practices. The incense burner would have been an important object in Maya civilisation.

Use clay to shape and make own pots using pottery techniques.

3. Cacao Beans

The Guatemalan Maya were the first people to document their use of cacao, and it was considered very important. The Mayans would dry, grind and mix these beans with water to make a bitter and frothy drink, often mixed with chilli. The Mayans believed that chocolate was a gift from the gods, and they also believed it had healing powers. Research shows that the May used chocolate as a form of currency, exchanging the beans for goods and services, paying taxes and in religious ceremonies.

*Use the beans as a starting point to explore the journey from cacao to chocolate!
Investigate Fairtrade chocolate.*

4. Mayan Glyph

This Mayan Glyph has been hand painted on to handmade paper. The Mayans used signs for individual letters, as well as signs for whole words. Traditionally, amate paper would have been used; a type of paper made from the bark of fig trees in Mexico. The bark of the tree is stripped off and simmered in a large cauldron and then boiled in large kettles. The fibres which then remain are taken to the nearby stream for washing before being beaten with a stone on a flat surface, binding the fibres together. Once flat and smooth the paper is left to dry in the sun. The Mayans did not use an alphabet but used signs to represent full words and syllables. For example, there was one glyph used for the word 'sun'. It has taken centuries for the Mayan glyphs to be deciphered but a significant proportion can now be understood.

Look at examples of Mayan hieroglyphic writing. Discuss the differences and similarities between logograms (representing whole words) and syllabograms (representing syllables)

Invite the children to design their own glyph-this could be an animal, action or event. Investigate paper making and explore ways of making recycled paper.

5. Metate

(pronunciation – muh-tah-tee)

A metate is a grinding stone used for processing grain and seeds. They are usually made of heavy volcanic rock and vary in size. Traditionally used by women, they exist in many different designs and sizes and are still used in many parts of Mexico and Guatemala today. This is a miniature replica to show the shape, actual sizes are too heavy to move and too big for an artefact pack!

Use online resources to explore the tradition of tortilla making using a metate.

6. Mayan Copal Incense

A bundle of sacred fragrant black copal resin chips wrapped in corn husk, traditionally used by the ancient Mayans in fire rituals. This sweet, earthy and uplifting resin bundle should be carefully opened, and the individual chips added directly to hot coals in a fire or suitable burner to produce an aroma. Ritual and therapeutic use of these bundles continues into the modern day, including during meditation.

Provide a safe space for those pupils who would like to participate in meditation.

7. Mayan Plaque

Mayan art often depicts religious beliefs, their way of life, wars they had fought and portraits of themselves.

Design plaques and use air dry modelling clay and a range of modelling tools to create unique designs such as a self-portrait plaque.

8. Mayan Ceramic Stamp

This clay stamp has been inspired by the traditional stamps used by pre-Hispanic people. Original designs usually featured animals, as well as abstract shapes, gods and mythical figures. The stamps were primarily used to decorate the skin or clothing with prepared dyes although they were also sometimes used to print patterns into pottery before it was set.

Explore other options for stamping onto paper and fabric.

9. Archaeology

Turn your class into an archaeological dig and encourage questioning and historical research. Uncover physical evidence to learn about Mayan culture and life. By carefully examining the artefacts you can piece together a more complete picture of what Mayan life was like. Create a mock dig site and learn excavation techniques. Section up the dig into square areas so that each child or group can work on one area. Make it clear that the artefacts are fragile and need to be excavated with care. Plastic pallet knives and paint brushes are ideal for this activity.

When they have found their artefact task them to fill out an 'artefact report' where they draw the artefact and describe its features and likely uses. Encourage them to do further research and then report back what they have found out, labelling and displaying their artefact to create a classroom museum of finds.

The items in this pack have been sourced by a supplier who is a member of BAFTS (British Association for Fair Trade Shops and Suppliers). Nearly everything is handmade, and the Mexican ceramics are made by a small family business who are continuing a long tradition of producing pre-Hispanic ceramic replicas.

Reference Websites:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zq6svcw>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z2pmvj6#zw8r7v4>