



Eaton Primary School  
Art  
Knowledge Organiser



Unit of work  
Mayan masks

Year group  
6

Prior learning

- Collage and use of various media to create a piece of art work
- Sculpture
- Knowledge of Mayan culture

National Curriculum

- to improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials [for example, pencil, charcoal, paint, clay]

Vocabulary and definitions

Word	Definition
Mayan	The Mayan people lived in an area known as Mesoamerica. By 1000 BCE, their culture was established and remained until 1697 CE. During this time, Mayan kings were at war with each other a lot, often over gifts and prisoners, who they would sacrifice to Mayan Gods.
Civilization	An organised society with its own culture and way of life, existing in a particular area over a particular period of time.
Archeologists	a person who studies human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artefacts and other physical remains.
Spirits	Every King had a jaguar as their animal companion spirit, and were often depicted with jaguar in Mayan art.
Jaguar	A big cat, heavier than a leopard, with yellowish fur and black spots.
Ritual	A ceremony, often religious, with set actions performed in a set order.
Cacao beans	Cacao trees sprout pods directly from their trunks. When they are ripe, the pods can be broken open to reveal the beans, which can then be dried, roasted and ground.
Maize	Another word for sweetcorn or corn on the cob. It can be made into a dough and baked into tortillas.
Mixed media	Mixed media is an artwork in which more than one medium or material has been employed.

## Knowledge/ Skills

The Maya were a civilisation who lived in modern-day Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador. The Maya civilisation lasted from around 1000 BC to AD 1697.

The Maya created many different types of artwork. Their art depicted their religious beliefs, their way of life, wars they had fought, how they sacrificed people and their kings. Maya kings had a desire to be remembered and art was the best way they could achieve this.

From the carvings and paintings, archaeologists can say that the Mayas wore large headdresses made from feathers. These were a sign of status with the nobility wearing clothing made from feather too.

Masks played a central role in Maya culture. They were made for a variety of occasions and purposes. In fact, they were even used to decorate temples. Masks were often inspired by animals; they were vibrant and colourful.

The Mayas believed that animals represented the spirits. For example, many Maya often associated strong kings with jaguars. Event masks were usually made out of cedar wood.

Mayas were buried with a death mask, which was intended to protect the wearer on their journey to the afterlife. Each mask was made by hand and inspired by the maker's own imagination. Jade, a precious stone, was used because it symbolised the soul.



Death mask

## Pictures and links

