



The Maya

Break into pairs. Examine each fact. Using the chart, categorize each fact. When you are finished, play The Bell Game: “**Name that Theme!**”

More advanced:
Categorize facts from your textbook or the encyclopedia.

1. Study the locations, landforms, and climates of Mexico, Central America, and South America and their effects on Mayan, Aztec, and Incan economies, trade, and development of urban societies.

The Five Themes of Geography

1. Location

Exact location: What is the latitude and longitude?
Relative location: “It is north of such and such.”

2. Place

What’s it like in this place? Describe the characteristics!
Physical features: Natural (land, rivers, mountains, vegetation, climate).
Cultural features: Human (everything that is man-made!)

3. Interaction

How people interact with the environment = land, rivers, sea, climate.
How people adapt to, modify, and depend upon the environment.
Interactions: Grow crops, dig canals, mine for minerals, wear thin clothing for hot climate.

4. Movement

People move in and out. Who? Why? By what means?
Goods move in and out. What? Why? By what means?
Ideas move in and out. What? Why? By what means?
As a result of all this movement, this place is connected to other places.
What places?

5. Region

A region is a territory or area that has common physical or human features.
North China is a region with a common river, soil, climate, farming, culture and history.

The Bering Land Bridge 20,000 to 30,000 years ago

- Everybody in the Americas originally came from Asia.
- During the Ice Age (30,000 B.C.), glaciers covered the world.
- Like a sponge, glaciers absorbed ocean water and froze it.
- The world’s oceans dropped.
- As a result, there was a land bridge: You could walk from Asia to Alaska.
- Folks from Asia walked to Alaska.
- From Alaska, folks walked through North America and down to South America.

Hunters & Gatherers

- At first, people were hunters and gatherers.
- They hunted wild game - deer, rabbits, wild pigs and even jaguars.
- They ate delicacies - iguanas, armadillos, turtle eggs, and crocodile tails.

The Maize Culture

- Around 2500 B.C., hunters and gatherers in Central America stopped moving around and became *sedentary*.
- They settled down, started farming, and raised corn called *maize*.
- Mayan life and religion centered on growing maize and using it for food.

Central America

- The Maya settled down in Central America.
- Central America lies in between Mexico and South America.
- Central America lies in between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.
- The Maya were centered in Guatemala and its neighbors.
- The Golden Age of the Maya lasted from 300 to 900 A.D.

Answers

If you can explain your answer, you are correct!

- Movement
- Region
- Region
- Region
- Movement
- Movement
- Movement
- Interaction
- Interaction
- Interaction
- Movement stopped.
- Interaction
- Interaction
- Region
- Location
- Location
- Region
- Place

In the Rainforest

19. The Maya lived in the rainforest.
20. It is the only civilization that ever arose in a rainforest.
21. Tropical animals and insects were constant problems.
22. Fields were quickly overrun by jungle growth.
23. The Maya built 90 cities in the middle of the rainforest.
24. The major cities were Tikal, Palenque, and Bonampak.

Climate

Elevation

25. From 300 to 900, the Maya lived in the lowlands of Guatemala.
26. In the tropics, low elevation has extremely HOT weather.
27. In the tropics, the climate at sea level is HOT.

Temperature

28. The Maya lived in the tropics.
29. Year round, the daytime temperature in Tikal is 90 degrees.

Rainfall

30. The rainy season is from May to December.
31. The dry season is from January to April.
32. The dry season: Four months of drought.
33. To survive, the Maya built large-scale water reservoirs.
34. The rainy season: 120 inches of rain = 10 inches a month.*
35. It is a region of hurricanes, volcanoes, and earthquakes.

*San Francisco averages 2 inches a month; New York, 3 inches a month.

Farming in the Rainforest

36. The majority of people were farmers.
37. They grew corn, beans, squash, avocados, tomatoes, chili peppers, cacao, tobacco, and cotton.

Slash-and-burn

38. To clear the land, farmers used the slash-and-burn method.
39. They cut down the trees, burned them, and then planted corn.
40. When the trees were cut down, the land suffered soil erosion.
41. Soil erosion: Heavy rains washed the topsoil away.

Over-farming

42. Because of its weak soil, a rainforest can never support a large population.
43. Without fertilizers, the soil ran out of minerals in just four years.
44. After a farmer over-worked his land, he moved on to new land.
45. It took at least 70 acres to feed one family.

No plows, no draft animals

46. The Maya had no draft animals - no horses or oxen.
47. The Maya had no iron to make iron plows.
48. They planted corn at the end of the rainy season.
49. When the soil is mushy, you can plant seeds with a stick! (Don't need iron plow)
50. Corn was harvested in the dry season.
51. The heavy rainfall meant restricted, hurried planting and harvesting seasons.
52. The Maya used astronomy and the calendar to figure out the ideal time for planting.

19. Region
20. Region
21. Place - Physical feature
22. Place - Physical feature
23. Place - Cultural feature
24. Place - Cultural feature
25. Region - The lowlands
26. Place - Physical feature
27. Place - Physical feature
Low elevation is **tierra caliente**.
28. Region
29. Place - Physical feature
30. Place - Physical feature
31. Place - Physical feature
32. Place - Physical feature
33. Interaction
34. Place - Physical feature
35. Region
36. Interaction
37. Interaction
38. Interaction
39. Interaction
40. Interaction
41. Interaction
42. Place - Physical feature
43. Interaction
44. Interaction
45. Interaction
46. Place - Physical feature
Guatemala had no horses.
They all died during the Ice Age.
47. Place - Physical feature
Guatemala had no iron.
48. Interaction
49. Interaction
50. Interaction
51. Interaction
52. Interaction

5. Describe the Meso-American achievements in astronomy and mathematics, including the development of the calendar and the Meso-American knowledge of seasonal changes to the civilizations' agricultural systems.

System of Writing

53. Like Mesopotamia in Eurasia, the Maya were the first people in the Americas to develop a system of writing.
54. They created *hieroglyphs* - pictures that symbolize ideas.
55. Hieroglyphs were pictures that expressed ideas.
56. They made books out of paper from tree bark.
57. **Popol Vuh** was the sacred book of the Maya.
58. **Popol Vuh** contains ancient myths about the creation of the universe.
59. The Maya kept historical records on stone pillars called *stelae*.

Inventions & Innovations

60. The Maya were outstanding astronomers: They built observatories.
61. Like the Egyptians, they knew all about the seasons.
62. Like Galileo (1600 Europe), they knew that the earth moves around the sun.
63. The Maya invented a 365-day calendar that was more accurate than the European calendar of that time.
64. The Maya were superior at math: They invented zero. (Like the Hindus.)

What the Maya did not invent

65. The Maya did not invent the wheel.
66. The Maya did not invent iron weapons or farm tools.

Art

67. Like the Buddhists of India and China, the Maya painted colorful murals.
68. The Maya created fascinating clay pottery and stone sculpture.

Daily Life

Men and women were relatively equal

69. Men did most of the farm work.
70. Women did the cooking, spun yarn, wove textiles, raising chickens, went to the market, and took care of the children.
71. Maya men wore sandals (the terrain was rough); women went barefoot.
72. Because of the hot weather, people wore cotton clothes.
73. Men wore *loincloths*; women wore colorful cotton dresses and embroidered blouses.

Food

74. The *tortilla*, a flat cake made of corn, was the main food.
75. The Maya played a rugged sport that resembled basketball.
76. There were no schools.
77. The family pet was a dog.
78. Families lived in homes with thatched roofs.
79. Professional matchmakers decided who married whom.
80. The Maya valued people with crossed eyes and flattened heads.
81. The Maya were into body adornment: Bracelets, necklaces, pendants, earrings and tattoos.

53. Place - cultural feature
54. Place - cultural feature
55. Place - cultural feature
56. Interaction
57. Place - cultural feature
58. Place - cultural feature
59. Place - cultural feature
60. Place - cultural feature
61. Place - cultural feature
62. Place - cultural feature
63. Place - cultural feature
64. Place - cultural feature
65. Place - physical feature. Central America had no horses. They all died in the Ice Age.
66. Place - physical feature. Central America had iron.
67. Interaction - minerals and dyes.
68. Interaction - with clay
69. Place - cultural feature
70. Place - cultural feature
71. Interaction
72. Interaction
73. Interaction
74. Place - cultural feature
75. Place - cultural feature
76. Place - cultural feature
77. Place - cultural feature
78. Interaction with forest
79. Place - cultural feature
80. Place - cultural feature
81. Place - cultural feature

Trade & Transportation

82. The Maya travelled by canoe on the rivers and in the Caribbean Sea.
83. There were no horses or mules, so people carried loads on their backs.
84. The Maya exported goods (chocolate, cotton, tobacco) to central Mexico.
85. They used *cacao* beans as a type of currency (money).

The Big Move

Historians don't know why

The causes might have been: Overworking the soil, insufficient food supply, earthquakes, hurricane, pestilence, invasion by outsiders, internal rebellion or a combination of these factors.

86. Beginning in 900, the Maya abandoned their cities in the lowlands.
87. Many moved north - to Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.
88. By 1000, three million people had abandoned the cities.
89. The Maya settled on the Yucatan Peninsula.

The Yucatan Peninsula

Chichen Itza

90. Chichen Itza was a city on the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico.
91. The climate is sweltering hot, with a dry season and a rainy season.
92. Drought was one of the most feared calamities.
93. In 1464, a drought was followed by a swarm of locusts that ate everything green in sight.
94. Although rainfall was heavy, there were no rivers to hold the water.
95. The Maya used natural wells, but they never dug wells or used irrigation.
96. Most cities on the Yucatan Peninsula arose around wells.

82. Movement
83. Place - physical feature
84. Movement
85. Place - cultural feature
86. Movement
87. Movement
88. Movement
89. Region
90. Place - cultural feature
91. Place - physical feature
92. Place - physical feature
93. Place - physical feature
94. Place - physical feature
95. Interaction
96. Interaction

A game to learn how to categorize.
A game for those students who learn best by doing.
A game to assess learning.

The Bell Game: “Name that Theme!”

The week before

Go to Office Depot or Office Max and buy 5 bells. You know:
You bop it to call for service.

Make 5 signs: LOCATION, PLACE, INTERACTION, MOVEMENT, REGION

Ask the school custodian for a wide table and 5 chairs.

A panel of “experts”

In the front of the classroom, place the table and chairs.

In front of each, place a sign and bell.

Ask for 5 volunteers to sit as a panel of experts.

"You are responsible only for responding to facts which relate to your category."

The Reader

Choose a student to read the facts.

Explain: "When the reader read a fact which deals with your particular category, ring your bell."

The Answer Man

Choose a student to play this role. We suggest a boy or girl who has been absent.

Give the student the answer sheet.

Explain: "When a student rings the bell, you must say in a strong voice: 'That is correct' or 'That is incorrect.'"

How to begin

Ask students to test their bells.

"Do not ring your bell until the full statement has been read."

"If you engage in frivolous bell-ringing, another student will take your place."

The Reader reads the facts, one by one.

The Answer Man states whether the answer is correct or incorrect.

What if several students ring their bells?

All the better!

Ask the class whether or not the incorrect answer is possible, based upon the student's explanation.

Keep in mind that when you enter higher levels of thinking, certain answers are going to be "in the ballpark" and, therefore, acceptable.

More advanced

Using the same topic, read from the encyclopedia.

Ask students to explain their answers.

That is, exactly why does this fact relate to your category?