

# Ancient Maya on the Map Prompt Questions

The cities of Chichen Itza, Uxmal and Coba in the north remained strong after other cities had collapsed. Why do you think this happened? Could it have anything to do with their location?

During the 8th and 9th century some of the cities in the south went into decline. Why might that have been?

Do you notice anything geographically significant about where the Maya lived?

Do you think people travelled between the different cities? Why?

How might people have travelled?

# Ancient Maya on the Map Prompt Questions Answers

**During the 8th and 9th century some of the cities in the south went into decline. Why might that have been?**

Nobody knows for sure why these cities went into decline and were abandoned. Historians have a range of theories such as:

- The lowland cities were invaded by the Toltec people. The people that lived here may have been killed or fled.
- Because they were on lowland, the cities may have been plagued by disease. The environment may have been a breeding ground for insects like mosquitoes that spread a dysentery-like disease. (Dysentery is a horrible form of diarrhoea!)
- A drought (long period without rain) may have occurred, meaning the Maya in this area could not grow food.
- Over-farming may have led to the soil becoming so bad that plants would not grow.

**The cities of Chichen Itza, Uxmal and Coba in the north remained strong after other cities had collapsed. Why do you think this happened? Could it have anything to do with their location?**

These cities were built on higher ground, which meant that they were easier to defend from enemies, were less prone to disease caused by mosquitoes and less reliant on lowland farming.

**Do you notice anything geographically significant about where the Maya lived?**

The Mayan empire was mostly built on high-altitude, mountainous regions. The area would have been forested and hot. The North and South of the empire was bordered by the sea and the land borders to the East and West were narrow.

**Do you think people travelled between the different cities? Why?**

People often travelled between cities to trade (buy and sell things) and to perform religious rituals at the temple-cities.

**How might people have travelled?**

People mostly travelled by canoes within the empire, either along the coasts or on rivers. The Maya had no wheels or animals like horses or cows to carry loads, so would carry heavy things on the backs of slaves! There were many roads in the empire, but these may not have been suitable for carrying very heavy loads.