

Student Handout #2 – Empire, civilization, or both? Teacher Reference Sheet

The article you just read was titled “The Rise and Fall of the Mayan Empire.” Did the Mayans really have an empire? Were they a civilization? Revisit the articles using the checklists below. Check off the criteria for civilization, and then for empire, that the Mayans met. With your group, decide if you think the Mayans should be described as a civilization, an empire, or both.

<i>Civilizations have</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Did the Mayans have this?</i>	<i>Evidence / Example</i>
Cities	Cities supported large populations of over 30,000 people	yes	The map shows several cities... we don't know for sure how many people lived there, but historians think they were big
Specialization	People living in cities took full-time specialized jobs and were supported by farmers from the surrounding community.	yes	Source 1 asserts the existence of classes and states that farmers lived around the cities
Hierarchy	A class system emerged where certain men (and sometimes women) held all the power.	yes	Source 1 contends that classes existed
The State	Specialized roles for those making the rules. In early societies, these roles were often played by a king and a small group of officials.	yes	Sources 1 and 3 states that rulers had special functions
Networks of Trade	Many civilizations traded within and outside of their borders.	yes	The Mayans had an extensive trade network
Technology	People used advanced tools to develop their food supplies, housing, etc.	yes	The tools were advanced considering the resources available to the Mayans
Monuments	Large buildings were constructed like city walls, temples, palaces, and tombs for powerful rulers.	yes	Sources 1 and 3 confirm this- pyramids in particular were evident
Spiritual Beliefs/Laws	Spiritual beliefs and laws became richer and more complex.	yes	Sources 1 and 3 confirm this
Creativity	Individuals worked with the ruling class to study astronomy, mathematics, sciences, and engineering.	yes	Sources 1 and 3 confirm this

<i>Empire Checklist</i>	<i>Did the Mayans have these characteristics?</i>	<i>Examples / Evidence</i>
Group of states united under one ruler (often by force)	no	Source 1 confirms this- there were at least 20 different city states
Large geographic area	Yes	Relatively speaking the area was large although smaller than that occupied by the Han and Romans
United and ruled by a central authority	no	Source 1 confirms that there was no single ultimate authority
Organized military used to expand and hold territory	no	Mayans did not expand and hold territory at the expense of other (Source 1)
Territory included different cultural and geographic regions	Yes/no	There was some variation culturally and geographically but this was minimal compared to Han and Romans

So... how would you describe the Mayans? Were they an empire, a civilization, or both? Provide some examples to support your claim.

Student Handout #3 – Comparing Societies in the Age of Empire

	Mayans	Rome and Han China	Possible explanation for difference (think about Geographic Luck when appropriate)
Tools and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metal only used for ornamentation (mainly gold); no iron • Use of wood, bone, and different stones for tools and weapons • No use of wheeled vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bronze and then iron tools and weapons • Wheeled chariots and wagons • Cement 	
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No large animals available for use in transportation • Developed system of paths and roads for trade, but all travel on foot • Use of small boats and rafts on waterways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of large mammals (horses, oxen, camels, etc.) • Wheeled chariots and wagons • Complex road systems • Roads paved with stone • A range of boats including larger ships 	
Government and military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several city-states with strong central rulers • No single authority over entire area • Warrior class / soldiers controlled by rulers of separate city-states • No large-scale conquest of peoples outside of Mayan area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong central government with an emperor • Bureaucratic system to control outlying territories • Large, professional and centralized army under authority of emperor • Armies used to control and expand territory 	
Scientific and cultural advances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly advanced in art and architecture with sculpture, written codices, pyramid building, organized sports • Developed knowledge of mathematics and astronomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly advanced in art and architecture with literature, sculpture, painting, monument building, public entertainment, etc. • Developed knowledge of engineering, astronomy, and medicine 	
Social hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High degree of social hierarchy with political and religious leaders at the top and laborers at the bottom • Enemies enslaved and sometimes sacrificed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High degree of social hierarchy with political leaders at the top and laborers at the bottom • In Rome, established system of slavery • In China, class of servants similar to slaves 	

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Tools and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metal only used for ornamentation (mainly gold); no iron • Use of wood, bone, and different stones for tools and weapons • No use of wheeled vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bronze and then iron tools and weapons • Wheeled chariots and wagons • Cement 	<p>-The Mayans might have had limited access to different metals, didn't have as much iron</p> <p>-No big mammals meant they didn't have anything to pull wheeled vehicles, so they never developed them</p>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No large animals available for use in transportation • Developed system of paths and roads for trade, but all travel on foot • Use of small boats and rafts on waterways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of large mammals (horses, oxen, camels, etc.) • Wheeled chariots and wagons • Complex road systems • Roads paved with stone • A range of boats including larger ships 	<p>-Geographic Luck... where there big animals that could pull wagons and chariots, these technologies developed</p>
Government and military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several city-states with strong central rulers • No single authority over entire area • Warrior class / soldiers controlled by rulers of separate city-states • No large-scale conquest of peoples outside of Mayan area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong central government with an emperor • Bureaucratic system to control outlying territories • Large, professional and centralized army under authority of emperor • Armies used to control and expand territory 	<p>-maybe lack of easy transportation using horses made it harder to move armies and supplies across longer distances, so strong leaders didn't go as far out to conquer</p> <p>-city-states fought but didn't seek to conquer and expand</p>
Scientific and cultural advances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly advanced in art and architecture with sculpture, written codices, pyramid building, organized sports • Developed knowledge of mathematics and astronomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly advanced in art and architecture with literature, sculpture, painting, monument building, public entertainment, etc. • Developed knowledge of engineering, astronomy, and medicine 	<p>-all societies developed in these areas</p>
Social hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High degree of social hierarchy with political and religious leaders at the top and laborers at the bottom • Enemies enslaved and sometimes sacrificed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High degree of social hierarchy with political leaders at the top and laborers at the bottom • In Rome, established system of slavery • In China, class of servants similar to slaves 	<p>-more similar in this way... they all developed hierarchies</p>