

## Gold experience B1+ Audio 10.1

Hi, everyone. For my talk today, I'm going to tell you about the Maya exhibition that I went to. It was brilliant.

I already knew that the Maya people lived in Mexico and Central America, but I didn't know how old their (1)\_\_\_\_\_ was. It's been 3,000 years since it first began, which is much longer than I'd expected, and it lasted for almost (2)\_\_\_\_\_ years. Luckily, enough buildings and objects have survived from that time to give us a (3)\_\_\_\_\_ of what their life was like. Their civilisation is interesting for several reasons.

The Maya lived in the (4)\_\_\_\_\_, surrounded by dangerous wild animals. The jaguar was king of the jungle, and was greatly feared and respected by the Maya. I noticed several stone jaguars at the exhibition, and it was fascinating to find out that in Maya culture this beautiful animal was a symbol, not of (5)\_\_\_\_\_, but of power. The rainforest itself certainly wasn't a relaxing place to live. I'm amazed that these people were able to cope with the (6)\_\_\_\_\_, which changed from heavy rain to (7)\_\_\_\_\_ and months without a drop of water. It seems to me to be such a tough place to survive in! However, despite all the hardships, they managed to farm the land so successfully that a (8)\_\_\_\_\_ of several million people was able to live there.

The Maya built some fascinating architecture. One of the most interesting objects in the exhibition was a model of a Maya pyramid which is still standing. It's called the El Castillo (9)\_\_\_\_\_ and the real thing in Mexico is hardly damaged at all, even though it's really old. When they see it, some people describe it as (10)\_\_\_\_\_, but I just thought – that's massive! It has four sides, and each side has a staircase. Including the final bit at the top, the total number of (11)\_\_\_\_\_ is exactly the same as the number of days in the year – 365. Is that by chance? I don't think so. The Maya people were very interested in measuring time and making (12)\_\_\_\_\_, so I'm convinced it was designed this way on purpose.

The Maya also built enormous palaces for their kings and other important people. They used to decorate them with awesome (13)\_\_\_\_\_. They'd also cover the walls with huge paintings, which I found fascinating because they can tell us a lot about Maya (14)\_\_\_\_\_.

From the works of art that have survived, you can see that richer Maya liked to wear colourful clothing made from (15)\_\_\_\_\_, decorated with feathers. The person who wore the tallest hat was considered the most important. I think that's quite funny!

I also saw some examples of Mayan writing at the exhibition. It looks quite like Ancient Egyptian, but interestingly, it works in a completely different way, according to historical researchers.

For relaxation, the Maya enjoyed music, and played a variety of musical (16)\_\_\_\_\_. You can see this from some of the decorated vases and sculptures at the exhibition. They had hundreds of different dances, too, which were often given (17)\_\_\_\_\_. One guide talked a lot about the Monkey Dance, which is still performed today. I'd love to see it!

It's strange how the Maya were completely different from us in many ways, but in other ways they were just like us! They shared our love of ball games, and built (18)\_\_\_\_\_ where they would hold special sports events. Big crowds could sit and watch the matches on either side of the playing area. In the city of Chichen Itza, archaeologists have discovered (19)\_\_\_\_\_ of these amazing buildings!

The Maya civilisation eventually (20)\_\_\_\_\_ around a thousand years ago, perhaps because of a long period without rain. But the Ancient Maya are the ancestors of many people alive today, who (21)\_\_\_\_\_ the traditions as best as they can.