



The Creation Story of the Maya

This story starts at the beginning when all that existed was stillness, silence and water. Life was not as we now know it. There was no light, no land, no people, no plants and no animals. Two deities (Gods), who were covered in colourful feathers (blue and green) lay in the waters. Tepeu, the Maker and Gucumatx, the Feathered Spirit came together to create the world. It was believed that their spirit and miraculous power gave the Earth its creative flair and energy. Anything they thought of - mountains, valleys, rivers, trees all came into existence.

Now that the land had a core - a heart - they called it Heart of Earth. To separate the sky from the Earth and clearly distinguish between the two, they planted a tall ceiba tree. This made space for all life to flourish.

- The roots penetrated deep in to the Maya Underworld.
This was 9 levels deep.
- The trunk stood proudly on the surface of the land
- The branches reached up to the Maya Upper-world which went up thirteen levels.



The tree was the start of the flora to inhabit the Earth as plants were soon created afterwards. Following this, Tepeu and Gucumatx created animals so they could be praised as their creators. But they could not speak and could not worship. Because of this lack of abilities, the gods decided to create human beings from mud. However, the first humans they created had no souls and were not seen as good 'keepers of the days'. Some even crumbled not long after they were made. The Maker and the Feathered Spirit wanted to create a more robust race of men.

The creators made a second attempt - this time creating humans from wood. These beings were much stronger, could walk, talk and reproduce. However, they had no minds or hearts and these wooden humans didn't have the ability to worship either, so they also were destroyed. Tepeu and Gucumatx sent a huge flood to destroy them and ordered their animal species to attack any survivors. Any that did survive are said to have become the monkeys in the trees - they were left there to be an example to future races of humans.



Following from their failures, the two sat and thought about how they should create the race of man that they wanted. They couldn't find a perfect material to use. Deep in thought one day, the animals bought the Gods some stacks of white corn. Tepeu and Gucumatz thought of a plan and ground this into a paste which allowed them to create four men. They seemed perfect: they were strong enough to endure nature and their minds and hearts were full of meaningfulness.

After being created, their first task was to worship their creators and be thankful for their lives. They were asked, "What can you see?"

The men replied, "We can see forever. Through everything on Earth - the rocks, the trees, the valleys in the mountains to all the corners of the Earth. We can see everything that you have created, with all the plants and animals. We can see and understand all that we see!"

The Maker and The Feathered Spirit looked at each other, slightly worried that they had made these humans a bit TOO well as they should not possess all the qualities and skills that they do as Gods. Therefore, they decided to relieve them of some of their vision so they couldn't see EVERYTHING. All they could now see were the things that were closest to them. They could now not see through or above things that were above their stature. This then meant that they did not understand everything in the world any more, but this is what Tepeu and Gucumatz wanted.

The 4 men continued to worship their creators and settled well in to life on the new land. The 2 creators realised they needed women too in order to continue their race and therefore made four women to become their mates. These 8 men and women were the ancestors of all Maya men and women that exist today. The Maya civilisation believed corn to be a precious substance that ultimately succeeds in producing true and enduring humans - even if they are not perfect.

The ancient Mayan civilization may now be long gone but this does not mean that the society has also ceased to exist. In fact, up to this day, there are approximately more than six million Maya people still thriving, living and surviving amidst the harshness of these contemporary days. They are found in Belize, Mexico and Guatemala. These modern Mayans still manage to integrate their old beliefs while living with modernized practices. Like most of us, these modern Mayans also struggle for survival; also fight for their rights; also aim to be given respect by others.



Questions

1. Match the following:

Tepeu
Gucumatz

Feathered Spirit
The Maker

2. Which colours were part of the Gods?

Red & yellow

Blue & yellow

Green & Blue

Blue & red

3. Draw the Mayan world once the ceiba tree had been planted - there are 3 layers. Make sure they are labelled with information you found in the text.

4. How do you think Tepeu and Gucumatz felt once they got people worshipping them?

5. Why didn't the creators want the 4 men to be able to see everything that they could?

6. How many and where can you find current Maya civilisation?

7. Which word would you use to best describe Tepeu and Gucumatz? Why? Explain using a sentence.

Big-headed

Selfish

Foolish



Questions

8. If you were one of the original 4 men, how would you have felt when some of your sight was removed? Think about who you would be saying it to.

9. Why do you think corn is so important to the Mayan people?

10. Clarify the following terms using the text to help you:

Thriving	
Flora	
Succeeds	

11. Explain why you think the Mayan civilisation believe it is ok not to be perfect.



Answers

1. Match the following:

Tepeu Feathered Spirit
Gucumatz The Maker



2. Which colours were part of the Gods?

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3. Draw the Mayan world once the ceiba tree had been planted - there are 3 layers. Make sure they are labelled with information you found in the text.

Diagram with the 9 layers of underworld, the ceiba tree on the land and then 13 layers of Upper-world

4. How do you think Tepeu and Gucumatz felt once they got people worshipping them?

Proud, accomplished, fulfilled, leaders, etc.

5. Why didn't the creators want the 4 men to be able to see everything that they could?

They wanted to stay superior and wanted to be the best.

6. How many and where can you find current Maya civilisation?

More than 6 million. Belize, Mexico, Guatemala

7. Which word would you use to best describe Tepeu and Gucumatz? Why? Explain using a sentence.

Big-headed

Selfish

Foolish

Own choice out of big-headed and selfish with own justifications using the text



Answers

8. If you were one of the original 4 men, how would you have felt when some of your sight was removed?

Own responses but stay in role and remember they would be talking to the Gods.

9. Why do you think corn is so important to the Mayan people?

Created their ancestry, food source

10. Clarify the following terms using the text to help you:

Thriving	Doing well
Flora	Plant life
Succeeds	Wins, does well, completes a task

11. Explain why you think the Mayan civilisation believe it is ok not to be perfect.

Own responses

