

# The Maya

## Learning Objective:

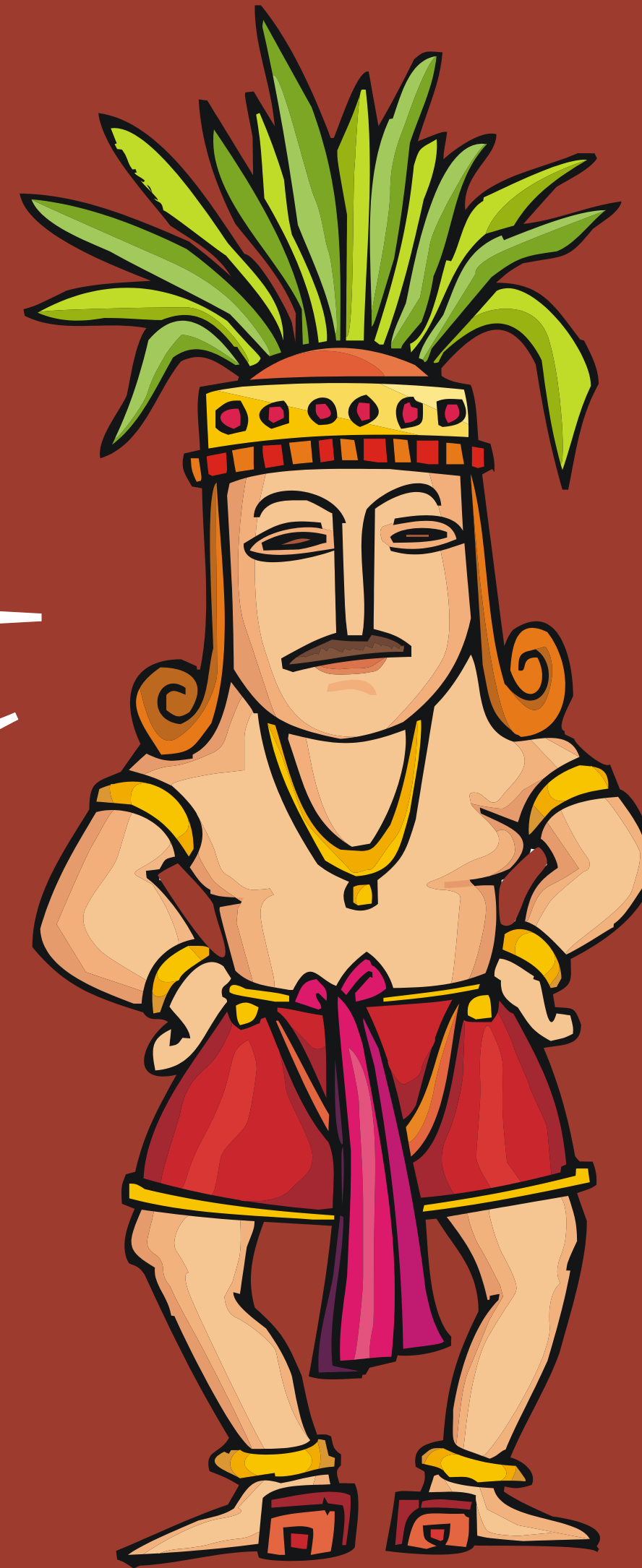
To find out about the city states of the Maya and how society was organised.

How is our  
society run?

Who makes  
our  
decisions?

Who is in  
charge?

How do they  
come to be in  
this position?



BACK

NEXT

The United Kingdom has a constitutional monarchy. This means that we have a king or queen who reigns over the country. However, it is the government that makes the decisions and rules the country. The Prime Minister is in charge of the government.



This picture shows the Houses of Parliament where the MPs meet to decide how the country should be run.

Our society is a democracy. This means that the people can vote for who they want to be in power.





Do you think Mayan society was organised in the same way as British society or do you think it was different? Why?

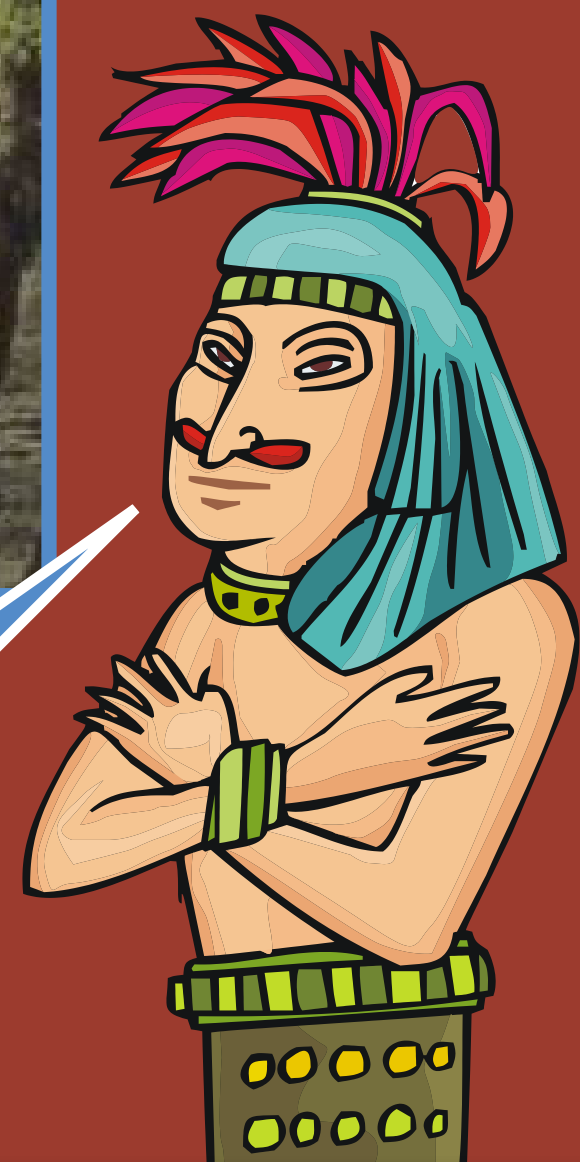
BACK

NEXT

Mayan society was organised into city states. Each city had its own king who was in complete control over his subjects. The king had nobles to help him control and run the city state. This type of society is known as an absolute monarchy.



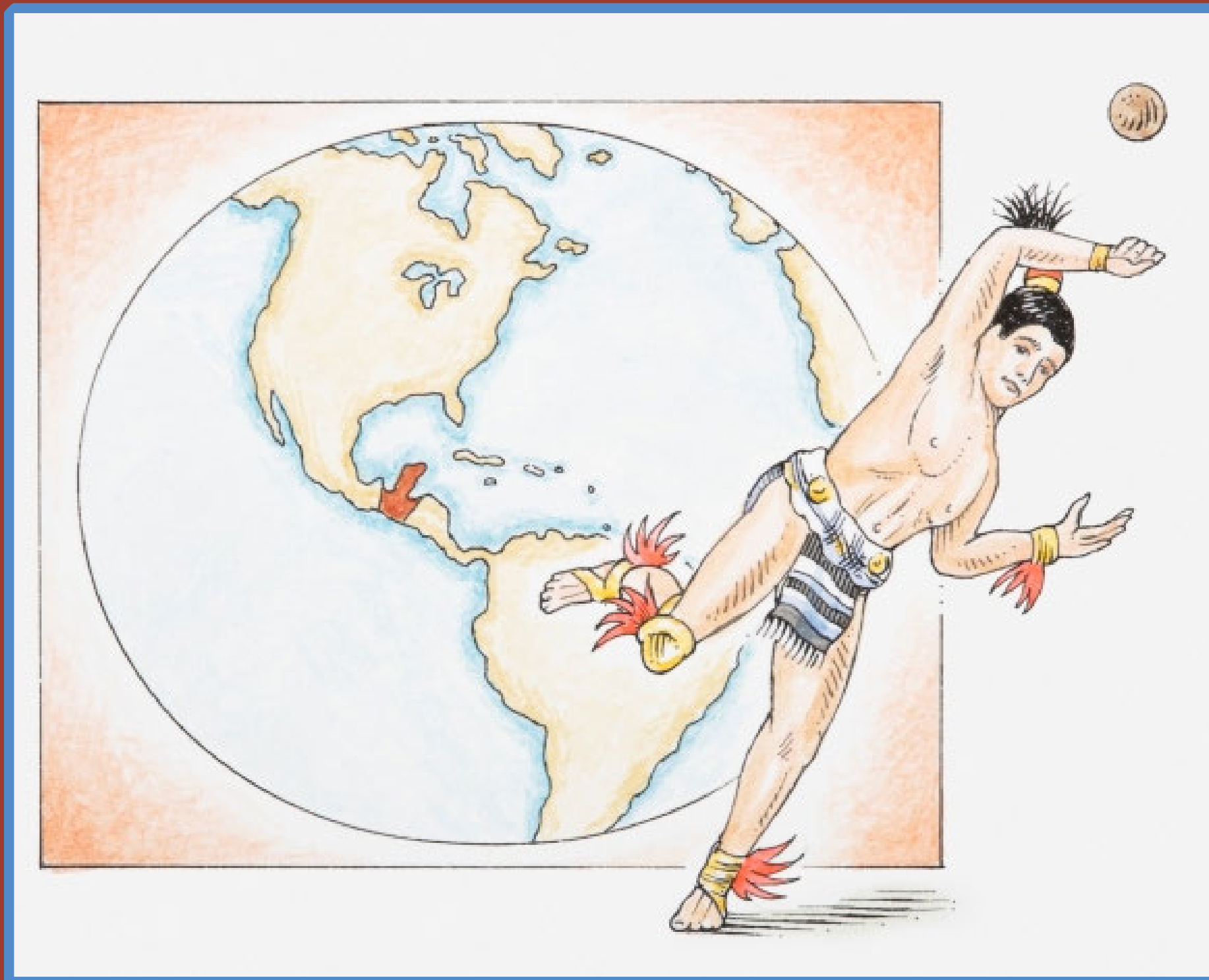
This picture shows a statue of Tecun Uman, one of the last kings of the Maya.



BACK

NEXT





This map shows some of the major Mayan city states. Each city state had its own king. City states would trade with each other but would also go to war frequently to try to gain power, wealth and glory for their city state.







king

nobles and priests

palace officials

merchants and craftsmen

farmers

labourers

slaves

What do you think  
the role of each of  
these groups of  
people was?

Mayan society was structured a bit like a pyramid. The higher up the pyramid you were, the more important you were.

BACK

NEXT



Mayan kings were the most important people in the city state. They lived in fine palaces, ate the best foods, wore the best clothes and did all they could to show their wealth and importance. The Maya believed that kings were chosen by the gods. This meant that the king's orders and wishes always had to be obeyed.

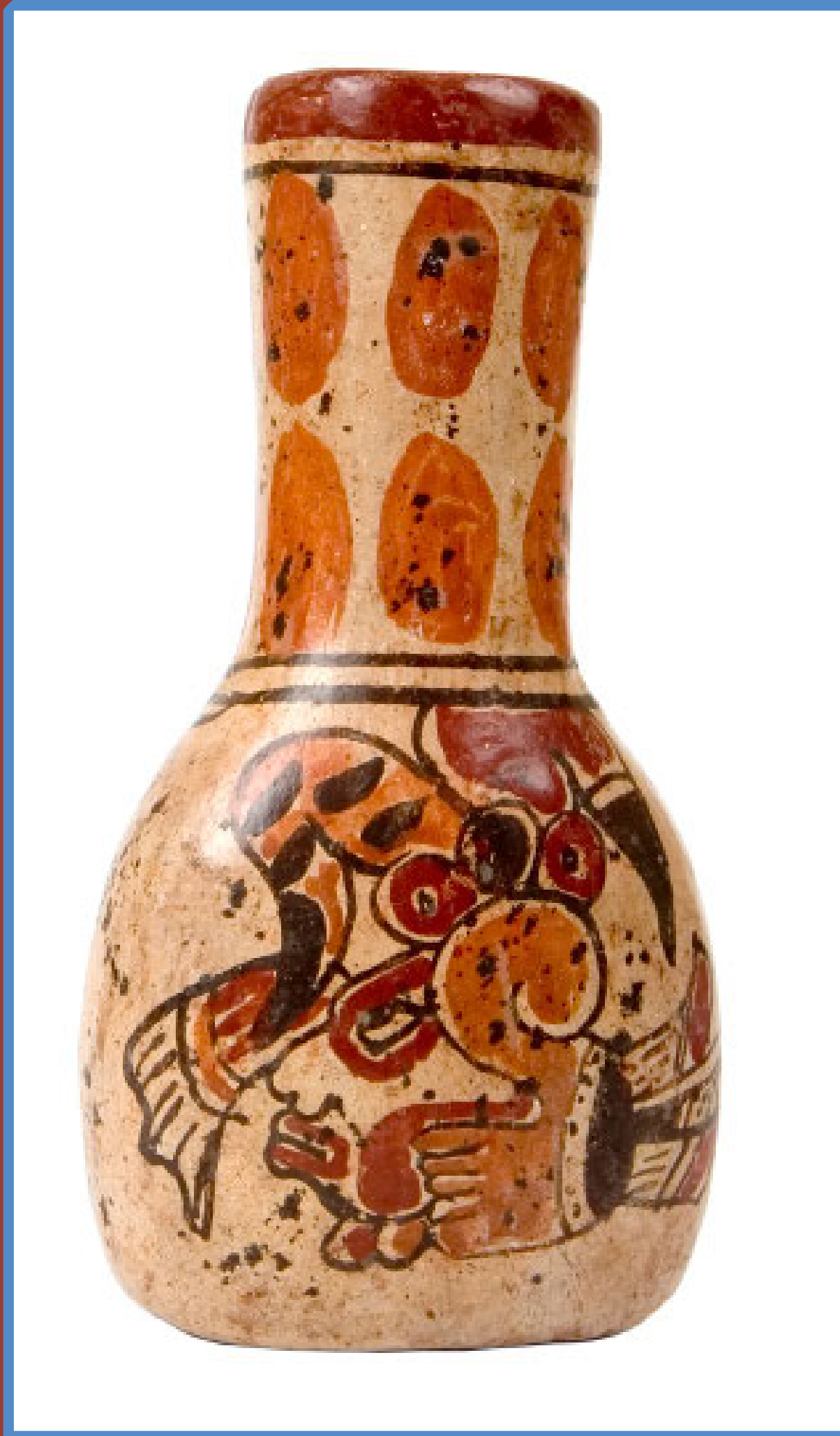
This picture shows a stele of one of the kings of Quirigua.



The nobles and priests were very important in Mayan society. It was these people who were educated and were the scribes and astrologers. They were wealthy and lived in grand houses. Palace officials were important people too. They were in charge of the day-to-day running of the city.







A Mayan earthenware vase.

Craftsmen included anyone who had a skilled job, such as a stonemason, tailor, potter, woodcarver or jewellery maker. Merchants bought and sold goods at markets.



Gold and jade stone were prized by the Maya, who used them to make jewellery.





Most ordinary people in Mayan society were farmers. They usually lived in small settlements outside of the city. These people lived simple lives and had little status in society.

Mayan farmers grew crops such as corn, sunflower seeds and cotton.







Labourers and slaves had little power and were the least ‘important’ people in society. They did all the hard manual labour that was needed to build temples and other buildings. They were poor and always had to do as they were told.





king

nobles and priests

palace officials

merchants and craftsmen

farmers

labourers

slaves

Which of these  
groups of people do  
you think had the best  
life in Mayan society?  
Why?

BACK