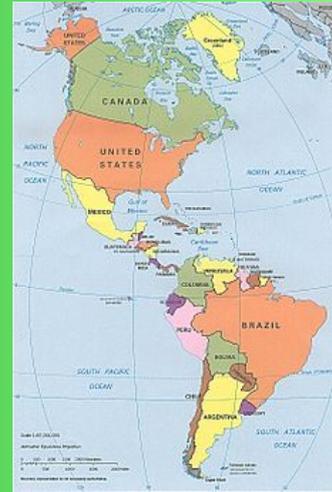


LO: I can locate and describe, using geographical terms, Central America.

Task: Where in the world is Central America? Using the maps and atlases describe the location of the Central America using as much geographical terminology as possible.



**A good example:**

Central America is the southernmost, isthmian portion of the North American continent, which connects with the South American continent on the southeast. Central America is bordered by Mexico to the north, Colombia to the southeast, the Caribbean Sea to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Central America consists of seven countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. The combined population of Central America is between 41,739,000 (2009 estimate) and 42,688,190 (2012 estimate).

LO: I know how human and physical features affect settlement site and situation

Write this thought bubble into your book and complete



Settlement site and situation

The piece of land upon which a settlement is built is the settlement site.

There are many reasons why a site might be chosen for the development of a settlement and some factors will be more important than others.

The situation of a settlement is its position in relation to the surrounding human and physical features, many of which will have an impact on the settlement's type, size and function.

Think about all the factors we thought about earlier - why might some be less important now?

Task 1: Record what is meant by site and situation

Task 2: Take your blank map of the Maya region and use the atlases to mark on the physical features of the area.



Use your map of Central America and think about why the ancient Mayans may have built their cities where they did.

Let's explore the region in greater depth.

**Highlands**

The Highlands are a series of volcanic mountains of the Sierra Madre, including Tapachula Volcano. Another chain of mountains begins near the Mexican border with the Galapalapa range, then stretches east through the Chiucús and Chamé sierras, down to the Santa Cruz and Minca sierras, near the Caribbean Sea. The northern and southern mountains are separated by the Motagua river.

Although they have tectonic volcanoes and earthquakes, the soil is fertile and the climate pleasantly cooler than the lowlands. The rainy season is between May and November, with peak rainfall in June and October. The midlands Highlands, however, were the source of obsidian, jade, and other precious metals like copper and hematite that the Mayas used to develop a lively trade. There are the remains of an obsidian quarry at El Choyal. There are also lakes in the Highlands low altitude. There is a narrow strip of low-lying land at the coast of the Pacific Ocean.

Many dangerous animals occupied this region of the peninsula including the jaguar, the caiman (a fierce crocodile), the bull shark, and many species of poisonous snakes. These animals had to be avoided as the Mayas scavenged the forest for foods including deer, turkey, peacocks, hares, rabbits, and large rodents such as the paca and the agouti. Many varieties of monkeys and quetzal also occupied the upper canopy. The great city of Copan is in the Highlands.

**Southern lowlands**

The Southern Lowlands are separated from the Highlands by volcanic mountains called the Sierra Madre. The Southern Lowlands rest on a limestone plateau, mixed with flat. The limestone was used for buildings and the flat for fields. The lowlands are quite flat except for an area of low mountains called the Maya Mountains.

There are the major rivers Motagua and Usumacinta and also lakes and bays, which become swamps in the rainy season and small areas of swampland (dry grassland). It is possible that in the Classic Maya period the bays were shallow lakes and the swampland was forest.

The vegetation is mostly a high, dense and humid tropical forest called the Petén forest of Guatemala, but also part of the Mexican Chiapas region. The main tree is the ceiba, a sacred tree. The animals include the jaguar and small mammals, birds including the quetzal and macaw, reptiles, amphibians, fish and insects. The coast has lagoons and estuaries with in marine mammals, fish, shellfish and mollusks. The Southern Lowlands are home to the most ancient style of Maya monumental architecture including the site of Tikal.

**Northern lowlands**

The Northern Lowlands rest on the same limestone plateau, but are a drier environment than the Southern lowlands. The surface is relatively flat, except for a zone of hills called the Puuc hills, and the soil is extremely thin but very fertile in some areas. It is mostly in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico.

The only freshwater sources are underground. There are natural wells, called cenotes, that preserve themselves. There are also underground rivers and lakes in caves. The vegetation is low but dense and composed of a brush forest of bushes and small trees, like the bay cedar.

The animals are composed of a few large mammals, small mammals, birds like the oriole and the weaver, reptiles and an abundance of insects. The coast, on the other hand, has beaches, lagoons and mangrove swamps with lots of marine mammals, fish like atolepny, shellfish and mollusks. The Northern Lowlands are home to a later style of monumental architecture including the site of Uxmal.

Task: You have different pictures of the regions. I want you to make mini sketches of one of each. If you can do more then you can have raffle tickets.

**Where did the historical Maya live?**



Look at your map and the settlements that are preclassical.

How many are there?

Some early Mayan cities had nearly 8,000,000 people living in them making them some of the biggest settlements in the world.

Finally, lets look at where the Maya settlements are and why they might have settled there. Discuss.

**LO: I know how human and physical features affect settlement site and situation**

Write this thought bubble into your book and complete



**Settlement site and situation**

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**Technological advances**

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Let's explore the region in greater depth.

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