

Contents

6 About 3000 years ago ...

Deep in the rainforest of Central America, villagers go about their daily lives.

8 A thousand years later ...

The Maya people have cleared a large area of forest, drained swamps and constructed large stone buildings.

10 About 600 years later ...

Hundreds of workmen build up a huge step pyramid using rubble to cover over an earlier building.

12 A few years later ...

It is market day in the Maya city. In one of the plazas, traders set up their stalls.

14 A hundred years later ...

To the noise of drums, whistles and trumpets, warriors from a neighbouring Maya city go into battle.

16 A few weeks later ...

At the top of a temple-pyramid the ruler and his priests prepare for an important ceremony.

18 A few years later ...

Angry shouts go up as one player is pushed roughly to the ground by another. A ball game is in progress!



20 About 150 years later ...

Workers, farmers and craftspeople live in their thatch huts clustered among the crumbling temples and palaces of the old city.

22 More than 600 years later ...

Spanish soldiers arrive, to be greeted by the villagers who still live among the ruins of the ancient city.

24 A hundred years later ...

The old city has been abandoned and the forest has taken over. People have forgotten it was ever there.

26 About 250 years later ...

Archaeologists searching for remains of old Maya cities find small, steep “hills” in the forest.

28 Today

Many of the city’s buildings have been restored and the forest trees cut away. Tourists from all over the world visit the site.

30 Glossary

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Introduction

Imagine you are standing in a rainforest in Central America thousands of years ago. Some farmers cut down some trees and make a small settlement there.

Over the centuries, a city of towering temple-pyramids and magnificent palaces grows up on that same site.

The story told in this book is like a journey. It is not a journey you can make by plane, car or ship. In fact, you don’t have to go anywhere at all. You are about to travel through *time*. With each turn of the page, the date moves forward a few weeks, years or even centuries. Each new date—each stop on your journey—is like a chapter in the life of the city. The early days as a small village, the first stone buildings, the great city at its height with its bustling markets, ball games and colourful ceremonies, the exploration by Spanish soldiers, the years as forgotten, crumbling ruins completely covered over by rainforest trees, its discovery by archaeologists and new life as a place for tourists to visit—all tell the story of the lost city of the Maya.



Look out for the boy with his pet parrot. He appears in all of the illustrations. More often than not, he cannot resist stealing something!

Use this thumb index to travel through time! Just find the page you want to see and flip it open. This way you can make a quick comparison between one scene and another, even though some show events that took place many years apart. A little black arrow on the page points to the time of the scene illustrated on that page.



The Maya were the only native American people to have a complete writing system. They wrote using symbols called glyphs. Each glyph contained parts that stood for sounds or syllables. When these parts were combined they could stand for a word or an idea. These glyphs (above) are read as columns, top to bottom. They tell the story of the capture of "Jewelled Skull" by "Bird Jaguar" on a certain date.

About 150 years later ...

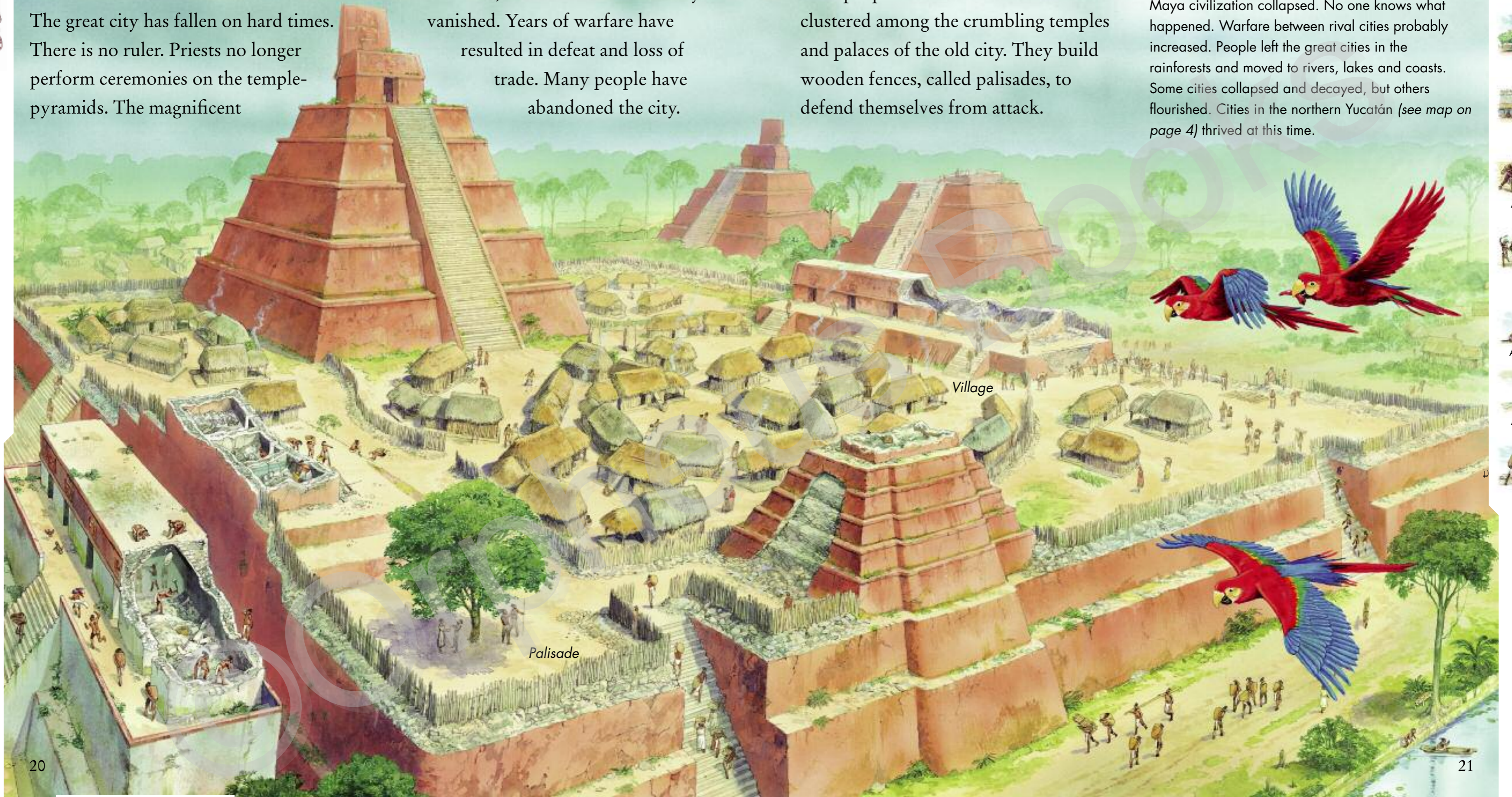
The great city has fallen on hard times. There is no ruler. Priests no longer perform ceremonies on the temple-pyramids. The magnificent

palaces, once lived in by nobles, have fallen to ruin, their treasures and finery vanished. Years of warfare have resulted in defeat and loss of trade. Many people have abandoned the city.

Now the workers, farmers and craftspeople live in their thatch huts clustered among the crumbling temples and palaces of the old city. They build wooden fences, called palisades, to defend themselves from attack.

THE FALL OF THE MAYA

From about AD 800 to 925, some parts of the great Maya civilization collapsed. No one knows what happened. Warfare between rival cities probably increased. People left the great cities in the rainforests and moved to rivers, lakes and coasts. Some cities collapsed and decayed, but others flourished. Cities in the northern Yucatán (see map on page 4) thrived at this time.



1000 BC



AD 50



AD 650



A few years later



AD 755



A few weeks later



A few years later



AD 910