



THE DESCENT OF THE SERPENT

Content and
links



In the below slides, you can find the content used throughout the game as a guide.

Explore the jungles, mountains, caves and coasts of ancient Mesoamerica to help save the world in *The Descent of the Serpent*, an ancient Mesoamerica-inspired video game from Google Arts & Culture.

[Descent of the Serpent](#) invites users to step into the world of Mexico & Central America's ancient civilizations through a mission to retrieve 20 items from Mexico's National Museum of Anthropology that have been transported back in time and hidden in a 4-level maze.

The game immerses players into a world of mythological figures, Nahuas, talking Resplendent Quetzals, and ancient artifacts representing the symbols on the [iconic Aztec Sun Stone](#), which players must return to Chichen Itza before the equinox.

Created in partnership with the [Museo Nacional de Antropología \(MNA\) in Mexico](#).

Level 1 Object 1 - CUETZPALIN/LIZARD

Cuetzpalin, or Lizard, is the sign for the first day of the fourth 13 day week (or trecena) of the ritual calendar. It is associated with the god Huehuecoyotl. Mesoamerican cultures used two separate calendars to calculate dates. The ritual calendar, or tonalpohualli, was 260 days long, and made up of 20 trecenas. The solar calendar, or Haab, was 365 days long. Each day was identified by a number (1-13) and the symbolic name of the trecena. In a 260 day year, every combination of number and glyph name was used once.

This piece, unfortunately missing a head, shows a crouching lizard with a series of mythical creatures carved on its abdomen. The piece was carved from animal bone.



Level 1 Object 2 - TOCHTLI/RABBIT

Mesoamericans believed that - instead of a man's face - they could see Tochtli (rabbit) on the surface of the moon. The day is associated with Mayahuel, the goddess of fertility. In a Mayan myth, the Lords of the Underworld mistake a rabbit for the ball, allowing the Mayan Hero Twins to trick them and win the game. The Maya ballgame, the world's oldest organised sport, has been traced back to around 2500BCE. Players were only allowed to hit the rubber balls with their right hip, elbow and knee.

This sculpture shows a rabbit. During the creation of the fifth sun, two suns were created. Quetzalcoatl threw a rabbit skin bag over the second one to transform it into the moon.



Level 1 Object 3 - MALINALLI/GRASS

Malinalli, meaning grass, is the day of the Aztec calendar associated with Patecatl, the god of fertility and healing. Patecatl showed mankind how to brew pulque, a powerful and sacred alcoholic drink. Drunkenness was frowned on, with the majority of people only allowed to drink pulque during certain feasts. A first offence was punished by flogging and having one's hair cut off. A second offence was punishable by banishment and the offender's house was demolished!

This beautiful vessel is known simply as 'flower cup', showing a range of natural imagery and symbols (including the malinalli glyph) across its four twisted stems.



Level 1 Object 4 - COZCACUAUHTLI/VULTURE

Cozacacauhtli, meaning 'vulture', was the first day of the 16th trecena. The Maya name for it is Cib. Mesoamerican cultures played music using a variety of drums and rattles of various shapes and sizes, as well as wind instruments such as ocarinas, flutes, conch shells and trumpets. Music was a fundamental part of cultural life across Mesoamerica. Instruments have been found at archaeological sites and illustrated in paintings, carvings and on artefacts.

This drum shows a confrontation between an eagle and a vulture, suggesting it was once used by warriors. The drum is made of wood, with an animal skin covering.



Level 1 Object 5 - XOCHITL/FLOWER

Xochitl, or flower, was a symbol associated with Xochiquetzal, the Aztec goddess of fertility, beauty, and love. Xochiquetzal represented what were seen as 'feminine' crafts, such as weaving and embroidery. Despite this, tasks were shared with the whole family. Weaving and spinning tools were buried with men, women and children. With no wool producing animals in Mesoamerica, all textiles and weaving materials were plant-based. Royalty, priests and nobles had specific areas of their homes and palaces dedicated to the production of textiles.

This small sculpture is the depiction of a young goddess of vegetable fertility, and is shown holding corncobs in each hand.



Level 1 Stele 1 - Chichen Itza?

What is Chichen Itza?

Chichen Itza is an ancient Mayan city in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico. Its most famous monument is a pyramid known as El Castillo (The Castle) or the Temple of Kukulcán.

Who is Kukulcan?

Kukulcán is the Maya equivalent of your guide, the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl.

Why does El Castillo have so many steps?

El Castillo is made up of 365 steps, the same number of days in the year. Each of the four sides represents one of the seasons.

What is the Descent of the Serpent?

Twice a year, on the equinox, the sun forms the shadow of a serpent that slowly makes its way down the steps.



Level 1 Stele 2 - Teotihuacan?

What is Teotihuacan?

It was the first major city of ancient Mesoamerica, and was created before 250 BCE. Teotihuacan means “the place where the gods were created” in the Náhuatl language.

How many people lived there?

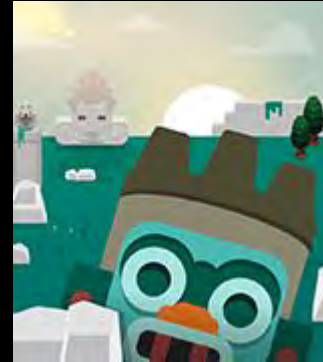
At one point it was home to a huge (for the time period) 125,000-200,000 inhabitants.

What is the Avenue of the Dead?

Teotihuacan is built along a North-South line, with a road, called the ‘Avenue of the Dead’ running for 1.5 miles through the centre.

What are the two pyramids?

At either end are two pyramids - the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon - that are so large that the Aztecs believed they had been built by giants.



Level 1 Stele 3 -

Maize

Why is Maize important?

Maize was the staple crop in Mesoamerica. It is rich in nutrition and can be grown in the wet lowlands as well as the drier mountain areas.

What are the Three Sisters?

The Three Sisters are maize, squash and beans.

Why were they grown together?

Squash plants grow at ground level and keep down weeds. Maize plants grow straight up through the squash. Beans grow around and up the maize.



Level 1 Quetzal 1

Q: Hello, the Sacred Resplendent Quetzal at your service, you can call me Quetz! I'll be sharing information about our world during your journey. You'll need it for the guardians.

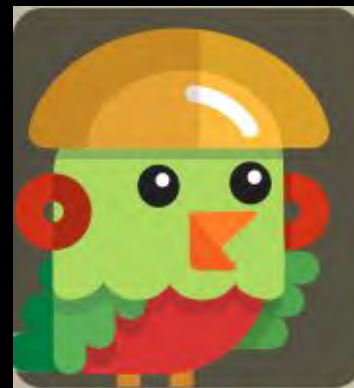
P: Nice to meet you, Quetz! The guardians you say?

Q: The Guardians of the Maze, beware! They'll question you, before you can proceed to the next challenge.

P: How do I prepare to face them?

Q: By talking to me, gathering information from the signposts, and the objects you collect.

P: Ok, I'll write everything down in my journal to keep track!



Level 1 Quetzal 2

Q: A cocoa for your thoughts? They'll power you up with extra points at the end, you know.

P: Thanks! I'm tired of running around. Could use some wheels!

Q: That won't be of use here, no large animals to pull you around in this part of the world.

But, if you do need help, follow the arrows on the ground, they'll show you the way! Or consult the stela by the guardian, she has the treasure map!



Level 1 Quetzal 3

P: I've been wondering. Who's the guardian of this Jungle?

Q: He's the Guardian of the East! He's Lord 4 Alligator, the mighty Blood Eagle!

P: Wow! Guardian of the East, huh?

Q: A guardian of one of the four cardinal directions, that the world is divided into.



Level 1 Quetzal 4

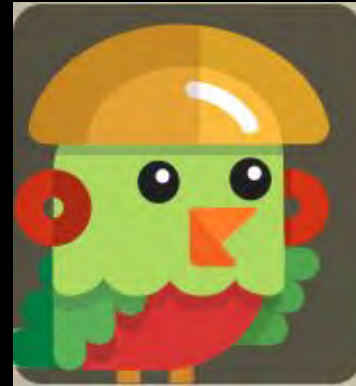
Q: Have you met Stela, yet?

P: Who?

Q: The teller of stories, legends and myths. She's tall, stoney, engraved...

P: You mean the pillar next to El Castillo pyramid at the beginning of the maze?

Q: So, you've met! Make sure you talk to her when you see her! She can teach you many important things.



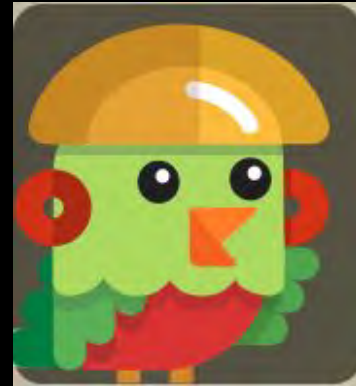
Level 1 Quetzal 5

P: I'm getting confused hunting down the coins on my own, any guide dogs around?

Q: You know the Aztec god of fire and lightning? Xolotl, what a dog!

Legend says that after the destruction of the fourth sun, Xolotl and his twin brother Quetzalcoatl travelled to the underworld to retrieve the bones needed to remake mankind!

P: Isn't that the hairless dog Xoloitzcuintli? Amazing.



Level 2

Once the first level is successfully completed and you answer the guardian's questions, player proceeds to the following level.

Level 2 Object 1 - EHECATL/GOD OF THE WIND

The Aztecs believed that there had been four previous eras of the world, as shown on the Sun Stone. The second era, or sun, was called Ehécatl. The first creation (Four-Jaguar) was destroyed when the earth was consumed by Jaguars. The second creation (Four-Wind) ended when Tezcatlipoca destroyed the world with Hurricanes. The third creation (Four-Rain) was destroyed by fiery rain sent by Quetzalcoatl. The fourth Sun (Four-Water) ended with a flood, its human inhabitants turned into fish by Tezcatlipoca.

The spider monkey has a buccal mask and stands on a coiled rattlesnake whose head, also with the glyph of Ehécatl rests on the right leg.



Level 2 Object 2 - MIQUIZTLI/DEATH

Miquiztli, meaning death in Nahuatl, is the first day of the sixth trecena. The day is associated with Tecciztecatl, god of the Moon. Tecciztecatl was supposed to become the Sun of the fifth age, but was too afraid to sacrifice himself in a fire until another god had done so. His cowardice angered the gods, who threw a rabbit at him, reducing his light. This is why the Aztecs believed that they could see the shape of a rabbit in the full moon.

This brazier was used for burning copal incense, which is still burned in special ceremonies today. It is placed on or near Day of the Dead altars to draw in the spirits.



Level 2 Object 3 - ITZCUINTLI/DOG

Itzcuintli is the 10th day sign, and is represented by the head of the dog. It is ruled by Mictlantecuhtli, the Lord of Mictlan - the lowest part of the Underworld. The ancient Maya believed that dogs and other animals could guide spirits to the underworld after death. The Maya believed that a soul could be reincarnated. The Maya buried their dead with maize in their mouth as a symbol of rebirth and, if they followed the path of the Maize god, could eventually be reborn.

This sculpture shows a mythical creature called a water dog. It is characterized by having a human hand at the end of its tail.



Level 2 Object 4 - TECPATL/FLINT

Tecpatl is the 18th day sign of the tonalpohualli, the sacred Aztec calendar. Tecpatl means 'Stone knife'. Metals were almost unknown until 800AD, but obsidian, a naturally formed volcanic glass, was the steel of Mesoamerica, and was used in a range of sophisticated ways. In Aztec and Maya cities, whole workshops were dedicated to specialist chipping of obsidian - for tools, figurines, jewellery and dart tips.

This flint knife was used in religious ceremonies and left as part of an offering to the gods.



Level 2 Object 5 - OCELOTL/JAGUAR

Ocelotl, meaning jaguar in Nahuatl, is the 14th day sign of the Aztec calendar. It was a day for honouring the Jaguar Warriors of the god Tezcatlipoca. The jaguar is the apex predator of the Maya rainforest. Because it could hunt at day and night, the Maya believed it could pass between this world and the underworld. This ability led to the jaguar being associated with the Sun, death, stealth and hunting. Many gods were shown wearing jaguar pelts.

The sculpture shows a sitting noble man, richly dressed with a paper fan on the back of his head, wearing fine jewellery and a helmet in the shape of a jaguar head.



Level 2 Stele 1 - Xiuhtecuhtli

XWho was the Turquoise Lord?

iuhtecuhtli (whose name means Turquoise Lord) was the Lord of Volcanoes in Aztec mythology.

Does he look like a volcano?

Xiuhtecuhtli was always shown with a smoking bowl on his head, representing the smoke that emerges from the top of a volcano. To the Aztecs, fire was the purest element, and a sacred flame was kept alight all year round in temples.

Was turquoise important?

Xiuhtecuhtli was believed to be the father of the gods, who lived in a turquoise dwelling at the centre of the Earth. Turquoise was the symbolic representation of fire.



Level 2 Stele 2 -

The Toltecs

Who were the Toltecs?

The Toltec culture was based in the The Valley of Mexico, a great mountain basin at an altitude of 2000 metres.

Where did they live?

Toltec communities were built around lakeside villages, developing agricultural techniques and trading obsidian, the equivalent to steel in Mesoamerica.

Where did they live?

The Toltecs were highly regarded by the Aztec culture, who saw them as sophisticated ancestors. In the Nahuatl language, the word Tōltēcatl or Tōltēcāh means 'artisan' or skilled tradesman.



Level 2 Stele 3 - Ceiba trees

What is a ceiba tree?

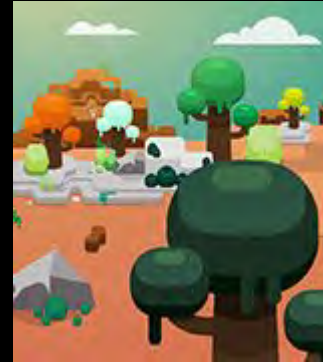
The ceiba is the sacred tree of the Maya. In one creation myth, the gods planted four ceiba trees in the four regions of the world, each with their own colour.

What about the fifth tree?

In the centre, a fifth tree was planted. In the roots of the tree was the underworld, where the dead reside. At its base was the land, and in the branches lived the gods.

What does Quetz signify?

At the top of the tree was the origin of the gods, represented by the Resplendent Quetzal, sacred bird of the Maya.

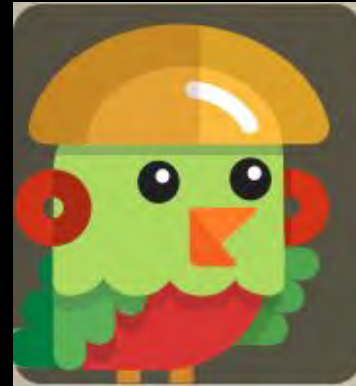


Level 2 Quetzal 1

Q: You look pale, have you come across any owls?

P: No, why would that scare me?

Q: An old saying goes, "When the owl cries, the Indian dies." You must avoid them! Our people know that owls are symbols of death and destruction, messengers from the underworld!



Level 2 Quetzal 2

Q: How are you liking your disguise?

P: Very much, really helps with blending in.

Q: Rumor has it that every human is connected with a nahual – a spirit animal that they could link with in dreams. If the animal died while the person was dreaming, they can die, too. Gods have a reputation for turning themselves into animals too. Tezcatlipoca, god of the night sky, apparently came to Earth as a spider the other day, then changed into a jaguar to play the ballgame against Quetzalcoatl.

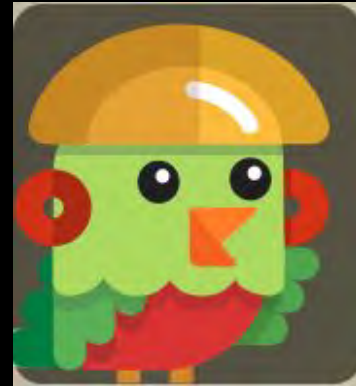


Level 2 Quetzal 3

Q: Hey, don't worry about dying so much. If you fall, the Hummingbird of the South will guide you.

P: Is that you? Aren't you a Resplendent Quetzal?

Q: I am! The Hummingbird of the South, which means Huitzilopochtli, is a wolf! He's the Aztec god of war and sun. Huitzilopochtli helps guide fallen warriors to the Underworld, where the warriors' souls would serve in his palace.



Level 2 Quetzal 4

P: Why are the trees different colours? Is it a seasonal thing?

Q: No, it's a direction thing. I'll have you know, each cardinal direction has a different colour association. North = White, East = Red, South = Yellow and West = Black.

P: Why am I seeing green, then?

Q: That's the center, of course!

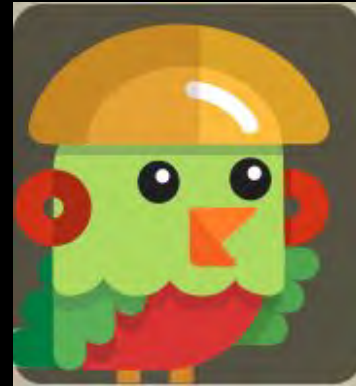


Level 2 Quetzal 5

Q: If I were you, I'd be scared of the guardian Tepeyollotl, the Heart of the Mountain!
He's the god of dark caves, earthquakes, and echoes! Oh, and jaguars, too.

P: Right. Very scary. Where is he though?

Q: At the mountaintop. You have been warned.



Level 3

Once Level 2 is successfully completed and you answer the guardian's questions, player proceeds to the following level.

Level 3 Object 1 - CALLI/HOUSE

Calli, which means 'house', is the third day sign of the 260 day Aztec calendar. It is associated with family and rest. The majority of the Maya lived in single room huts made of baked mud topped with thatched roofs. The wealthier Maya lived in stone buildings, constructed using an incredibly sophisticated mortar. The larger houses even had steam baths, where bricks were heated by the sun and then water was poured onto them to create steam.

This stone model represents a staircase plinth decorated with symbolic images. The front side has a solar disc with a symbol associated with the Fifth Sun at the centre.



Level 3 Object 2 - MAZATL/DEER

The image of a deer was used to represent Mazatl, the seventh day sign of the 260 day Aztec calendar. Food preparation was normally done by women. The ceramic pots used for stews, and the comales used for making tortillas, can still be found in traditional markets to this day. The diet of the Mesoamericans was mainly based on fruit and vegetables, but they hunted animals such as deer, dogs, cottontail rabbits and jackrabbits, wild ducks and geese, and small fish.

The surface of this tripod plate shows a dance or ceremony that recreates the deer hunting. The image features four hunters disguised as deer surrounding two striped deer.



Level 3 Object 3 - OZOMAHTLI/MONKEY

Ozomahtli is symbolized by a monkey and ruled by Xochipilli, the god of art, games, dance, flowers, and song. The Maya howler monkey god was a major deity of the arts and a patron of scribes. The Maya writing system combines elements that indicate sounds with pictorial signs. The Maya recorded their myths and history on stone tablets and books made of amatl, a paper made from fig-bark. The books were called codices.

A Maya vessel showing the figure of a monkey. It is possible that it was used to mix pigments for writing, as the howler monkey was the god of scribes.



Level 3 Object 4 - CUAUHTLI/EAGLE

Cauhtli, represented by an eagle, celebrates eagle warriors - one of the two prestigious orders of Aztec warriors. The Mexica had two prestigious orders of warriors: jaguar and eagle. To enter these orders, warriors had to demonstrate their military prowess by taking more than four captives in battle. Warriors enjoyed many privileges in Aztec society: they could drink alcohol, have mistresses, and wear jewellery. Eagle warriors wore quilted cotton armour with eagle feathers and an eagle head helmet.

This is a splendid ceramic brazier that still keeps very bright colours. An eagle warrior is shown on the front.



Level 3 Object 5 - QUIAHUITL/RAIN

Quiahuitl, meaning rain, is associated with the Aztec sun god Tonatiuh, who is also associated with travel and education. Tlaloc, the god of rain, was often shown with 'goggle eyes' and fangs coming out of his mouth. In Nahuatl, Tlaloc means "He who makes things sprout". As well as being the god of rain, Tlaloc also represented the water inside mountains. The tialogues, the servants of Tlaloc, filled their jars with the water from the mountain to make it rain.

This beautiful pot shows a mask of Tláloc. The face is formed by two serpents that coil around the eyes and join their heads on the mouth showing their long fangs.



Level 3 Stele 1 - The Sun Stone

What is the Sun Stone?

The Sun Stone - also called the Aztec Calendar Stone or the Cuauhxicalli Eagle Bowl is made up of four suns that indicate the previous eras of the world and three rings.

What do the three rings signify?

The inner ring shows 20 symbols for each day of the Aztec month. The second ring demonstrates the cardinal directions. The outer ring shows the creation of the current era.

How big is the Sun Stone?

The Sun Stone is three feet thick and 12 feet across, and weighs around 24 tons. It was carved from solidified lava in the late 15th century.

Where is the Sun Stone?

The Sun Stone has been displayed in Mexico City's National Museum of Anthropology since 1885.



Level 3 Stele 2 - River Travel

How did the Aztecs move goods and materials?

The Maya and Aztecs used canoes and rafts to transport materials around their empires. There were two types of canoe - one for sea and one for inland travel. The seagoing type is in a mural at Chichen Itzá.

How were canoes made?

Maya and Aztec canoes were dugout from a single tree trunk. The trunk had planks attached to it, which raised the main trunk and allowed more weight to be carried without sinking.



Level 3 Stele 3 - Cocoa

Why were cocoa beans important?

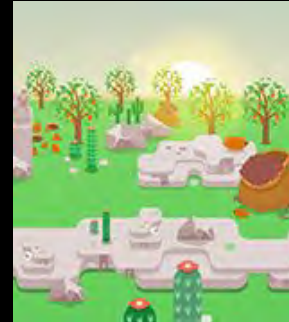
The Maya and the Aztecs believed that chocolate was a gift from the gods. Cacao beans were so valued that both Aztecs and Mayans used them as currency.

How were cocoa beans eaten?

Cocoa beans were ground into a bitter paste, so they were often combined with water, cornmeal, chili peppers, and other spices to improve the flavour.

Where does chocolate come from?

The Aztecs word for cocoa beans is 'chcahuatl', and the name of the bitter drink 'xocolatl'. It is believed that a combination of these words were the basis of the word chocolate.



Level 3 Quetzal 1

Q: Welcome to the Coastal and River area of Mesoamerica!

P: Is this like a big bird bath to you?

Q: I don't share baths with others. In any case, I hope you find all 5 icons swimmingly.



Level 3 Quetzal 2

P: Are there any other birds of interest around here?

Q: Why? Did the hummingbird hum something to you?

They're always showing off about their ancestry and love. The first ever Maya wedding was between two hummingbirds.

And then the Aztecs go and reincarnate their fallen warriors souls into hummingbirds!



Level 3 Quetzal 3

P: Hey, are there any mirrors around? My hair's a mess.

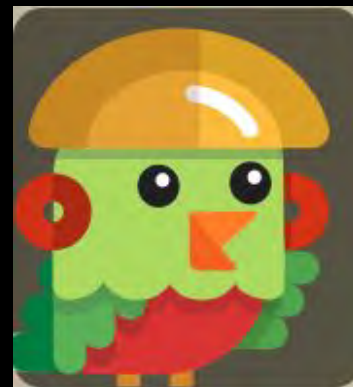
Q: Are you sneakily trying to reach the otherworld?

P: Why? What kind of mirrors do you have here?

Q: Mirrors here are made of mosaics, your hair would look even messier in them. But if you're using it to communicate to otherworldly beings, you can find a matching version looking back at you from the other side.

P: Wow, are they made of magic?

Q: No, just hematite, iron, or obsidian.



Level 3 Quetzal 4

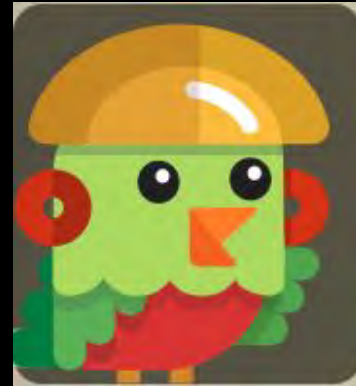
Q: You know what would be funny? If you wear a mask over your spirit animal. That would take your disguise to a whole other level.

P: Sure, give me your best!

Q: That'd be Turquoise, the most valuable. So precious it was made from smaller pieces. Besides, that's only reserved to the rich and famous.

P: I'm not? I'm saving the world!

Q: Well, you're not there yet. The most fashionable materials were wood, gold, shell, and volcanic rock. The more valuable the material, the more powerful the mask.

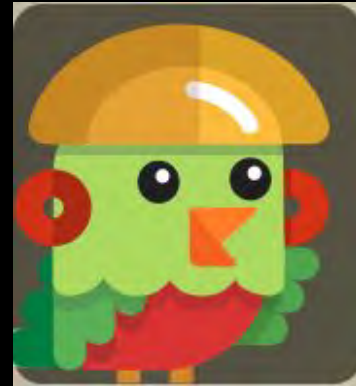


Level 3 Quetzal 5

Q: So proud of you! You've almost reached the Guardian here.

P: Phew! So, who is it?

Q: Their Nahuatl name is Yoco Sitna Yuta - which means Spirit Grandmother of the River. She happens to be the Patron of childbirth, too.



Level 4

Once Level 3 is successfully completed and you answer the guardian's questions, player proceeds to the final challenge.

Level 4 Object 1 - CIPACTL/CROCODILE

Cipactl, meaning crocodile, was a celestial beast created by four gods who signified the four cardinal directions – Huitzilopochtli, Xipe Totec, Quetzalcoatl, and Tezcatlipoca. The Maya linked the crocodile with the creation of the Earth. As it swims, its spiny back represents the peaks and mountains of the world, floating in a primordial sea. Crocodiles were also associated with rain-bringing wind, as Maya people believed that wind and rain clouds were breathed out of caves, which were thought to be the mouths of 'world crocodiles'.

This stone plaque, featuring a mythological Nahuatl animal called an ahuzotl (which means 'the thorny one from water'), was sent by Tlaloc, god of rain, to catch men to act as his servants.



Level 4 Object 2 - COATL/SNAKE

Coatl, meaning snake, is the fifth day symbol of the Sun Stone. Snakes were sacred to the Aztecs, and represented Quetzalcóatl. The god Quetzalcóatl transformed into a feathered serpent and was commonly represented as a rattlesnake. Instead of scales, the rattlesnake was covered in the feathers of a resplendent quetzal. The Aztecs worshipped Quetzalcóatl as the god of the priesthood, knowledge and trade. The Toltecs believed that their civilisation was founded by Quetzalcoatl, who lived in Chichen Itza until he was tricked by Tezcatlipoca.

Among the Mexicas, the god Quetzalcóatl transformed into feathered serpent was commonly represented in sculpture as a rattlesnake. This sculpture, with the neck and head high in a menacing position, clearly shows prominent fangs and eyebrows.



Level 4 Object 3 -

ATL/WATER

Atl, meaning water, is the 9th day sign of the 260 day Aztec calendar. Miquiztli, meaning death in Nahuatl, is the first day of the sixth trecena. The day is associated with Tecciztecatl, god of the Moon. Tlaloc's four attendants were responsible for gathering and hoarding all the maize after Quetzalcoatl tried to give it to humanity. After this, humans had to pray to Tlaloc if they wanted to eat.

A number of different sized Mexica stone boxes have been found containing diverse objects related mainly to the worship of water and fertility.



Level 4 Object 4 - ACATL/GRASS

Acatl, meaning reed, is the 13th day sign and, on the Sun Stone, is part of the East cardinal direction. Topiltzin Cē Ācatl Quetzalcōatl was the Lord of the Toltecs and their major city Tōllan. According to legend, he was born during the year and day-sign "1 Acatl," - which is May 13th, 895. The Toltec people thought he was the human representation of the god Quetzalcoatl. After his death, other leaders of the Toltecs and Mesoamericans empires took his name.

Ornate Toltec lid that shows Quetzalcoatl rising from the jaws of the earth, here represented by a coyote.



Level 4 Object 5 - OLLIN/EARTHQUAKE

Ollin is associated with movement, the four cardinal directions and earthquakes. It is associated with Xolotl, a god of fire and lightning. The Maya earthquake god was Cizin, who was also the god of death. Cizin was also associated with owls, who were believed to live in caves and were the messengers of the underworld. Cizin was often pictured as a dancing skeleton, holding something that looked like a cigarette.

This ceramic censer, in the shape of a dog, is believed to show the god Xolotl, in his guise as Venus, the evening star.



Level 4 Stele 1 - Cenotes

What are cenotes?

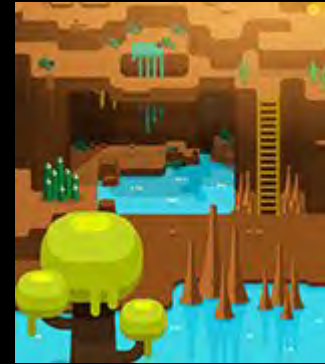
Cenotes are sources of natural water formed through the collapse of the limestone bedrock. There are different types of cenotes - from wells to underground lagoons.

How many cenotes are there?

There are thousands of cenotes dotted all over Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. All of the biggest cities that the Maya built between 300CE and 900CE, including Chichen Itza, were built on or near cenotes.

What did the Maya believe?

The Maya believed cenotes to be a gateway to the underworld, and the god of rain, Chaac, was believed to live at the bottom of these sacred wells.



Level 4 Stele 2 - Stone Sculpture

Was sculpture important?

The tradition of stone sculpture in Mesoamerica can be traced back to the Olmec people over 3,000 years ago.

What materials were used?

Sculptures were carved from everything from volcanic rock to semi-precious stones, and varied in size from intimate works to major public monuments.

Were sculptures everywhere?

Sculptures of the gods were an important part of everyday life, and were placed in homes, shrines and temples to remind the people of how existence was governed.



Level 4 Stele 3 - Xibalba

What is Xibalba?

The Maya underworld was called Xibalba, which means "Place of Fright". The Maya believed that the underworld was made up of nine levels, the first of which - Tlaticpac - was the surface of the world.

How did you get there?

Xibalba was entered through a cave or ceynote. Xibalba was ruled by a group of gods known as 'The Lords of the Underworld'.

What were the nine levels?

The nine levels of Xibalba were filled with trials and dangers that souls had to overcome. The nine levels of the underworld were represented by the Maya on their temple pyramid, which also had nine levels.



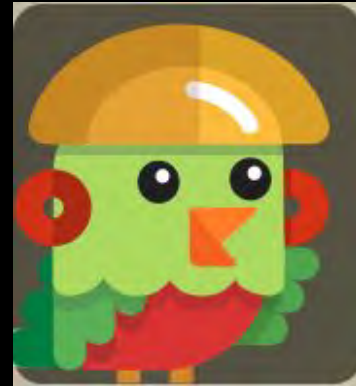
Level 4 Quetzal 1

P: I see you're in a yellow ceiba tree, are we down south now?

Q: Yes, welcome to the sacred caves! The entrance to the underworld.

P: I'm not ready for the underworld, yet!

Q: All you have to do is collect the final five icons of the Sun Stone, and avoid all the lurking danger. This is the Temple of Death, you must be careful!



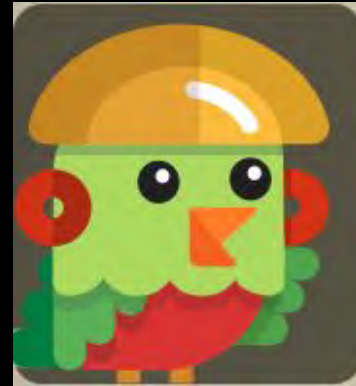
Level 4 Quetzal 2

P: What's with all the bats?

Q: Maybe because you're in a cave? You know, Camazotz made the deal that brought fire to humans. Fire comes in quite handy in caves.

P: Who's Camazotz? God of Bats? Or fire?

Q: God of Bats! Camazotz means "death bat" in the K'iche' language. Because, bats are night, bats are sacrifice, bats are death!



Level 4 Quetzal 3

P: I smell smoke, what is it?

Q: Oh, just burning some tobacco, feeding souls of the dead to protect the living. Tobacco has religious and spiritual qualities, and we're one of the first to burn it!

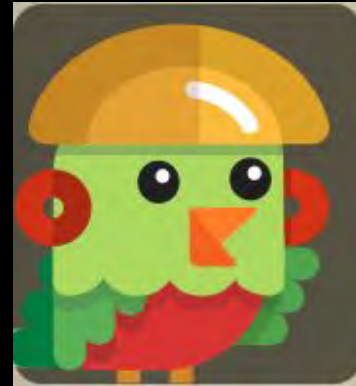
You know how the most powerful Maya deities, God L, is often shown as an old man smoking a cigar? That's why.



Level 4 Quetzal 4

P: Why are there double headed serpents spitting fire at me?

Q: Ooo, Maquizcoatl, those are bad omens. One head represents the sky, and the other represents the underworld. But together, they're a symbol of rebirth .. by fire?



Level 4 Quetzal 5

Q: Are you ready to meet Snake Woman, Cihuacoatl, the final guardian?

P: Noo, not snakes!

Q: Word in the jungle is that she helped Quetzalcoatl create humans of the fifth sun, by grinding up the bones of the previous humans, and mixing it with his blood. Good luck!



Explore more on [the Descent of the Serpent theme page](#).

Or learn more about the Maya World [here](#).

