

Life as a Mayan Child



Ordinary Maya children would have helped carry water and other items on their heads from the market to their homes. Archaeologists believe that a typical Maya family would probably get up before dawn and have hot chocolate and tortillas for breakfast. The Maya family all lived together. The women and girls ground corn for tortillas and wove clothing. The men farmed and hunted. The children helped out in the home and only went to school if they were from noble families.

Maya children were treated like small adults. A girl's job was to learn from her mother. A boy's job was to learn from his father how to do the same occupation as his father. If his father was a farmer, he learned how to be a farmer. If his father made weapons, he learned how to make weapons.

The children of commoners did not go to school. The children of Maya nobles were taught either at home or in small groups by a tutor.

It is unknown if Maya children played with toys. If they did have toys, these toys were probably small versions of tools that their parents used for work. Archaeologists have found something that looks like a game, but it is unknown if this was a child's activity or an adult activity.

When children reached the age of 15, the age a child became an adult in the Maya world, there was a coming of age ceremony. The ceremony included a public announcement by the priest that the child had been properly prepared by his or her parents for that child's life's work, and that the child was now ready for marriage. After the announcement, there was a party, a feast actually, given by the proud parents with invited guests. This ceremony was held by families of both commoners and nobles.

Shortly thereafter, a marriage was arranged, and that was that. Maya children did not have much a childhood. Some of their day was spent in prayer. Most of their day was spent working in ways that prepared them for the job they would do for the rest of their life when they became an adult.