

Maya Creation Story

Before the world had a true form, there were two Gods. These Gods were Tepeu, the Maker and Gucumatz, the Feathered Spirit. While the world around them was dark, the two Gods glittered with brilliant blue and green feathers. They came together to create the world.

Whatever they thought came into being. When they thought "Earth", land formed in the darkness. They thought of mountains and valleys, pine trees and sky. All of these things appeared the instant they thought them, and thus the Earth was formed.

Tepeu and Gucumatz decided that they needed beings there to look after their vast creation, and to praise their names as the creators. So they created deer and birds and panthers and serpents, all the creatures that roam the Earth today.

"Now praise us! Say our names!" commanded the creators.

But the animals could only roar or howl, bleat, bark, twitter or moan. They tried as hard as they could to speak, but they could not. They chirped and mewed at the top of their lungs until the noise was so deafening, that Tepeu and Gucumatz ordered them to stop. Disappointed, the makers agreed that they would have to create better beings, ones who would be able to worship them properly.



The first race of men were made from wet clay. The creators gave them life, and the first men tried to speak; but instead they crumbled apart soon after they were made. The Maker and the Feathered Spirit were determined to create a hardier race of men.

The second race of men were carved from wood. These were much stronger, and were able to walk and talk and multiply. But these men had no minds and their hearts were empty. They had no memories of their creation and when they spoke their words were just as empty and meaningless. They could not praise their Gods.

Tepeu and Gucumatz sent a great flood down to destroy them. They commanded the animals to attack the survivors and tear them to pieces. The few who managed to escape fled to the woods and became monkeys. The creators left them there as an example to the next race of men.

The Maker and the Feathered Spirit thought for a long time about how they should make the race of men they wanted. There seemed to be no perfect material to build them. Finally some animals brought the Gods a stack of white corn which grew on the far side of the Earth. Tepeu and Gucumatz ground this into a paste and from this formed four individual men.

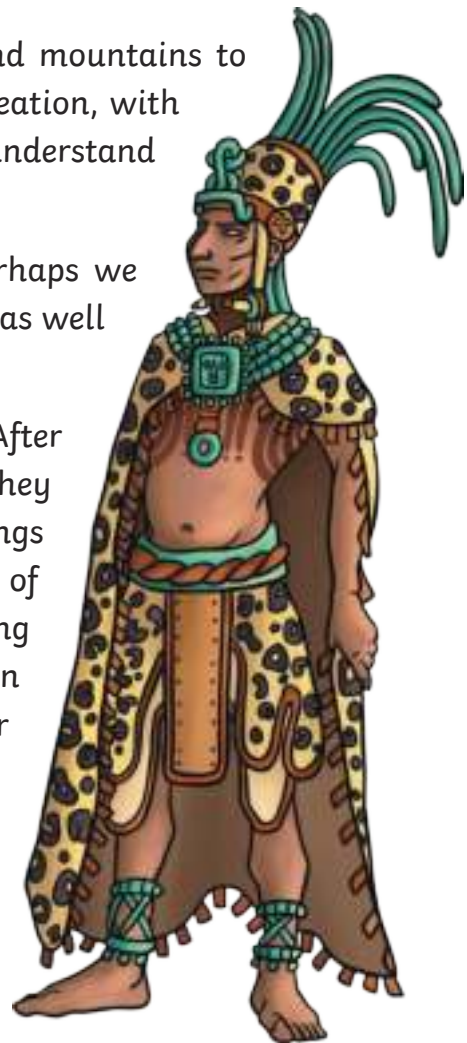
The new beings seemed perfect. They were sturdy enough to last and their minds were rich with thoughts and feelings. Their first act after their creation was the immediately worship Tepeu and Gucumatz, and thank them for their lives. Tepeu and Gucumatz were pleased. "What do you see?" they asked the corn men.

"We can see forever, through rocks and trees and mountains to the edges of the Earth. We can see your entire creation, with all of its animals and plants. We can see and understand everything!"

Tepeu and Gucumatz looked at each other, "perhaps we made these beings too well... they should not see as well as WE do!"

The makers removed some of the men's vision. After that they could only see things close to them, and they were no longer able to see through or above things that they should not. Thus their understanding of the world was weakened. But the men still sang their creators' praises and settled down to live on the new land. Tepeu and Gucumatz made four women to be their mates.

These eight men and women were the ancestors of all Quiche men and women today. Even today their sight and understanding of the world is not perfect.



Questions

1. What are the names of the two Gods?

2. How did the Gods create things like Earth?

3. Why did the Gods order the animals to stop trying to say their names?

4. Why did the Gods create the first race of men?

5. What were the first race of men made from?

6. How were the second race of men, who were made from wood, better than the first?

7. Name two ways that the wooden men were destroyed.

8. Why did the Gods remove some of the new beings' sight?

9. What do you think this tells us about what the Gods are like? Why?

If you had a to make a race of man, what material would you make them from and why?

Answers

1. What are the names of the two Gods?
The Gods were called Tepeu, the Maker and Gucumatz, the Feathered Spirit
2. How did the Gods create things like Earth?
The Gods created Earth by simply thinking about it.
3. Why did the Gods order the animals to stop trying to say their names?
The Gods ordered the animals to stop because no matter how hard they tried they couldn't speak and the noise was becoming deafening.
4. Why did the Gods create the first race of men?
The Gods created men because they wanted to be worshipped and the animals couldn't do this properly.
5. What were the first race of men made from?
The first race of men were made from wet clay.
6. How were the second race of men, who were made from wood, better than the first?
The second race of men were much stronger, and could walk and talk and multiply.
7. Name two ways that the wooden men were destroyed.
The wooden men were destroyed by a great flood and the animals tearing them to pieces.
8. Why did the Gods remove some of the new beings' sight?
The Gods removed some of their sight because they didn't want them to see as much as the Gods could.
9. What do you think this tells us about what the Gods are like? Why?
Answers will vary depending on children's opinion: e.g. The Gods were selfish because they only cared about being the most powerful beings.
10. If you had a to make a race of man, what material would you make them from and why?
Answers will vary.