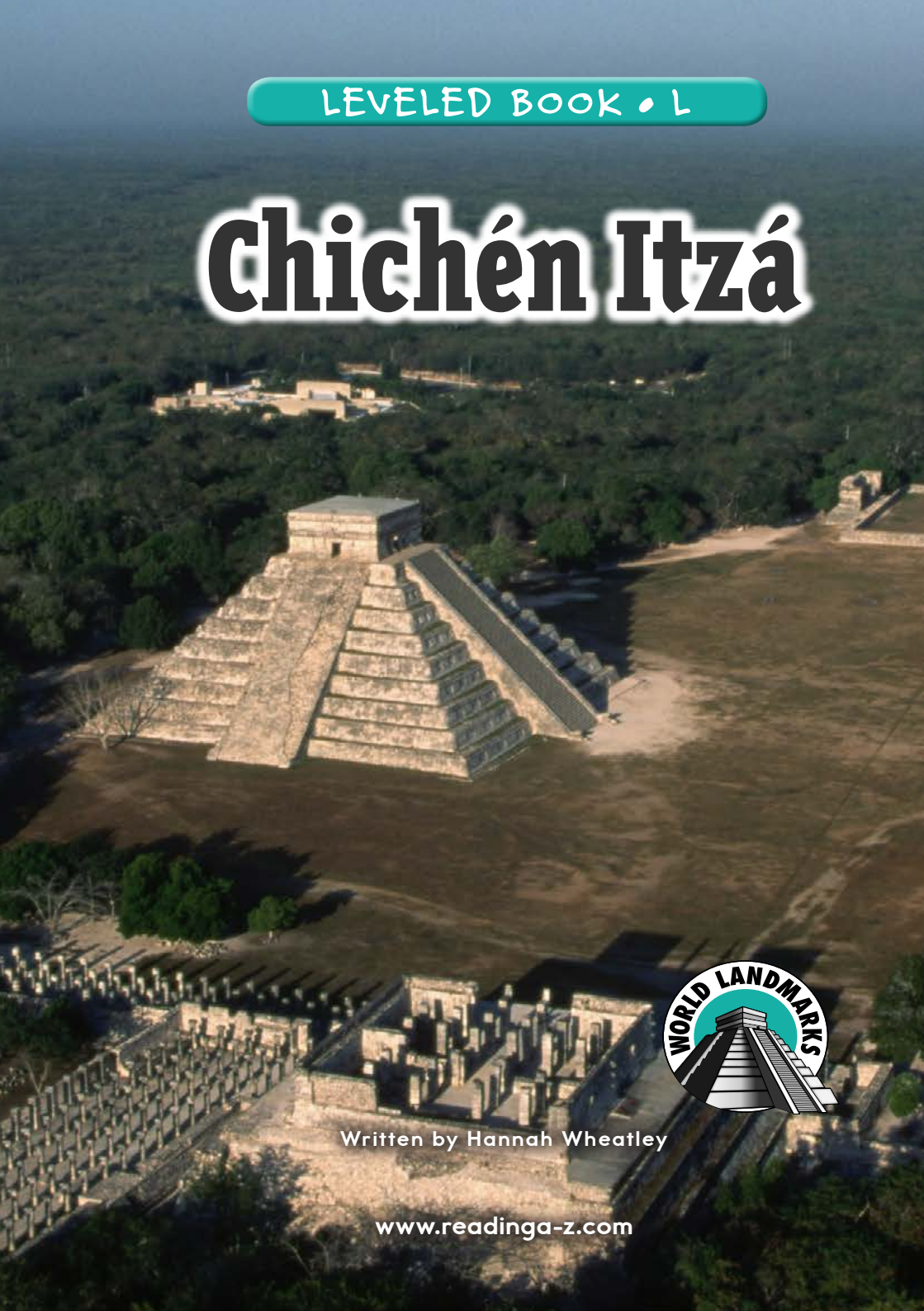


LEVELED BOOK • L

# Chichén Itzá

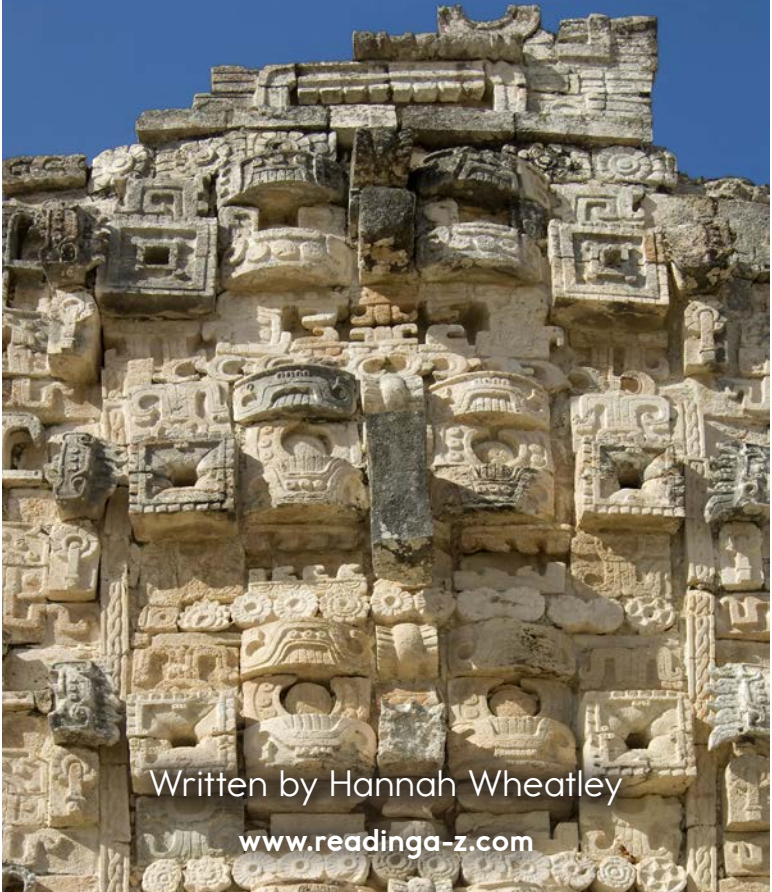


Written by Hannah Wheatley

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)



# Chichén Itzá



Written by Hannah Wheatley

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

## Focus Question

What makes Chichén Itzá an important landmark?





## Table of Contents

A Building in the Jungle .....	4
The Yucatán .....	5
An Old City .....	6
Building Chichén Itzá .....	8
A Special Spot .....	10
Seeing Chichén Itzá Today .....	13
A Wonderful Place .....	15
Glossary .....	16





There were about three hundred buildings at Chichén Itzá. About fifty thousand people lived in the area.

## A Building in the Jungle

Long ago, two men were exploring a jungle in Mexico. People had told them about the **ruins** of an old city nearby. Suddenly, the men spotted a tall building covered with plants. They had found one of the most important old cities in Mexico—Chichén Itzá (chee-CHEN eet-SAH).

# The Yucatán

Chichén Itzá is on the Yucatán (yoo-kah-TAHN) Peninsula, in Mexico. Most of the land on the peninsula has stayed the same for hundreds of years. There are a few big cities, but the land near Chichén Itzá is still jungles, forests, and farms.





In 1842, jungle plants were growing on El Castillo. Today, the building has been fixed to look as it did hundreds of years ago.

## An Old City

Chichén Itzá was built many hundreds of years ago by the **Maya** people. They made stone buildings that still stand today. The building that the two men saw is called El Castillo (EL kahs-TEE-yoh)—Spanish for “the castle.”



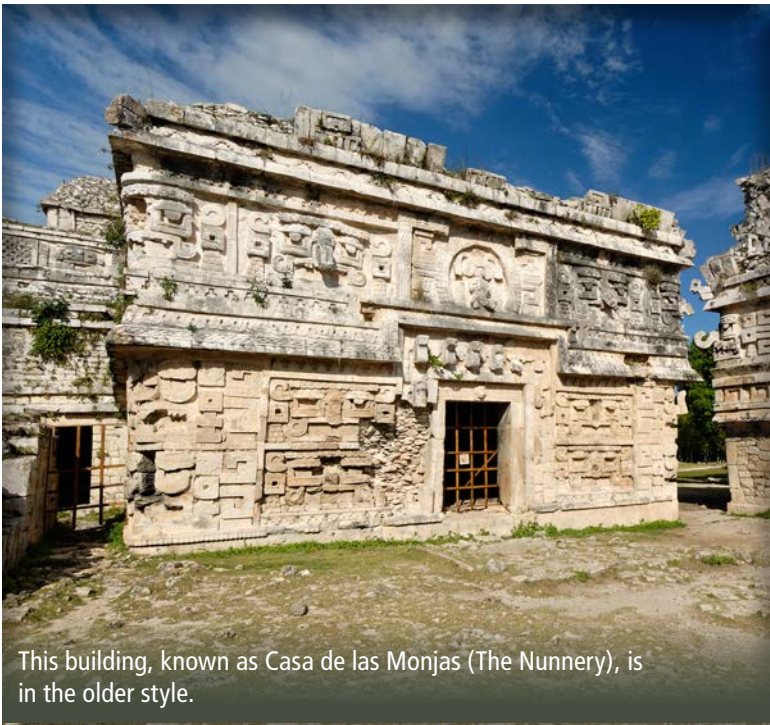
Some scientists think that one of the goals of a Maya game was to get a rubber ball through the stone ring.



The Great Ball Court in Chichén Itzá is a big field with a stone wall. Men played a game using a huge, heavy rubber ball. Scientists are still trying to learn how the game was played.

## Building Chichén Itzá

It took the Maya hundreds of years to build the city. The older buildings are low and flat. They often have plain stones on the bottom and fancy **carved** stones on top. The newer buildings, like El Castillo and the Great Ball Court, are different. They have snake carvings and tall **columns**.



This building, known as Casa de las Monjas (The Nunnery), is in the older style.

The Temple of Warriors is an example of the newer building style. The temple has about two hundred stone columns around it.



The Maya did not use wheels, so they couldn't carry stones in wagons. They didn't have horses to drag heavy things, either. Every stone had to be carried to the city and put in place by Maya workers.

## A Special Spot

The Maya had an important reason to build a city where they did. This part of Mexico has no rivers or lakes. Instead, fresh water comes up from underground **wells** called *cenotes* (si-NOH-teez). Chichén Itzá had two cenotes.



Cenotes in Chichén Itzá were important for water and for religious reasons.



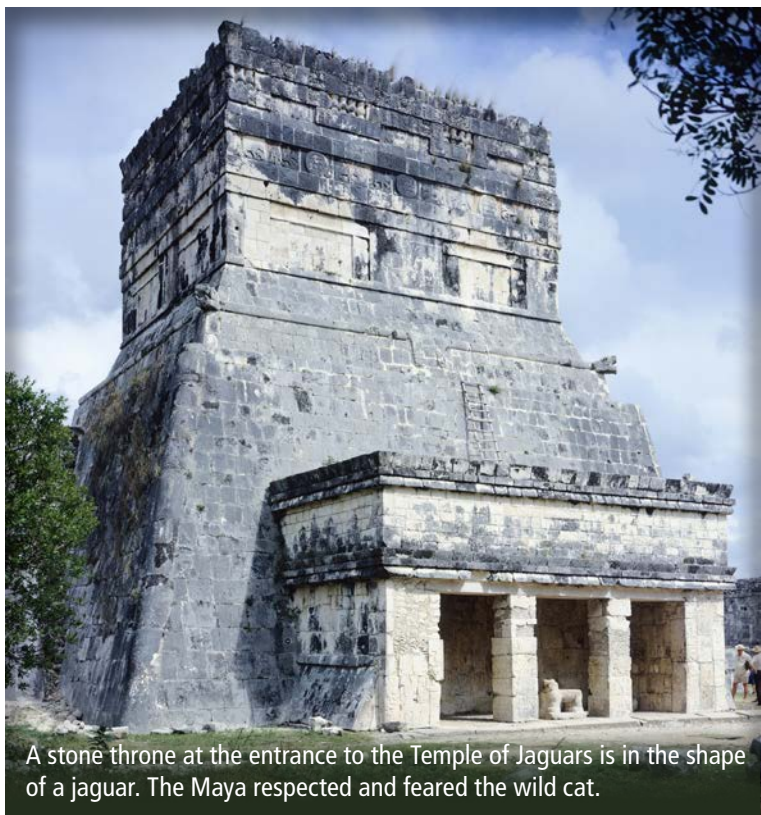


Scientists think that people may have traveled from far away to honor the rain god with gifts made of gold. Gold was not used by people in this part of Mexico.

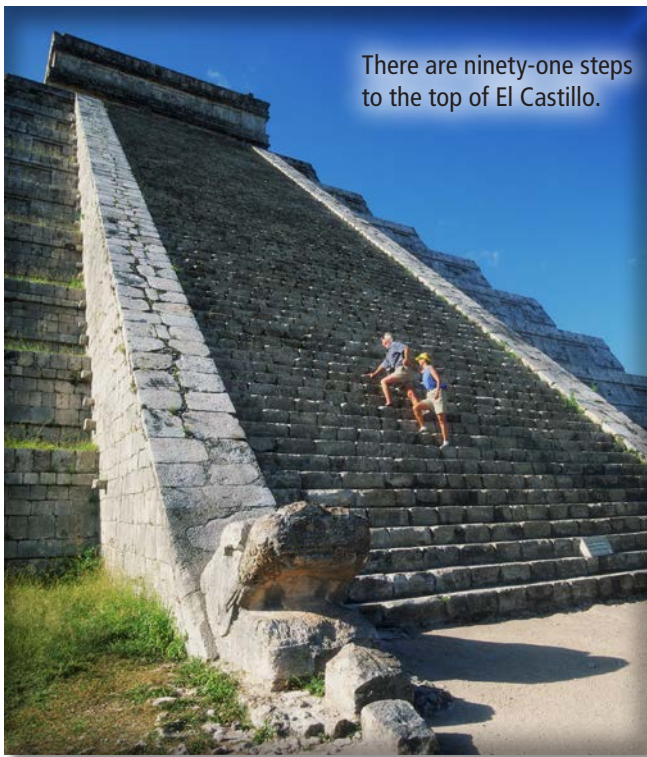
The wells were important for drinking water. The Maya also put gifts in the water for Chac, their rain god. If Chac liked the gifts, they believed he would send rain to help their corn and other vegetables grow.



The Maya believed in many gods and gave gifts to each one. Many of the buildings at Chichén Itzá were **temples**. El Castillo had a temple at the top for a god that looked like a snake with wings. Scientists are learning about what this god meant to the Maya people.



A stone throne at the entrance to the Temple of Jaguars is in the shape of a jaguar. The Maya respected and feared the wild cat.



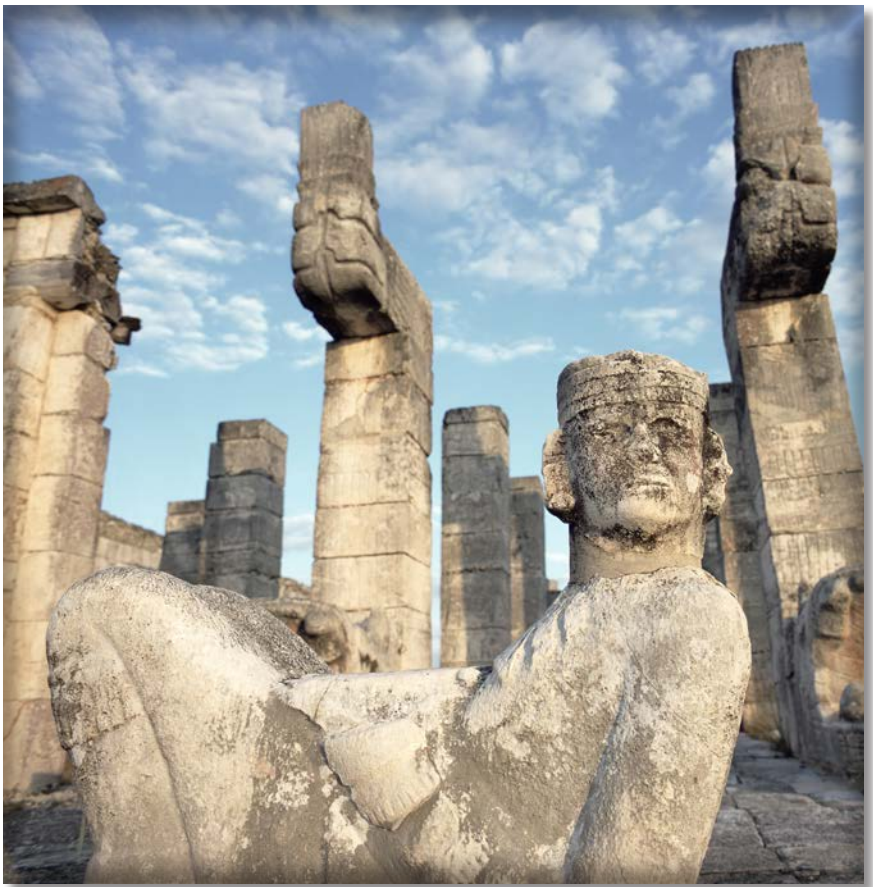
## Seeing Chichén Itzá Today

More than one million people visit Chichén Itzá each year! Many people climbed the steps at El Castillo. Over time, the steps became slippery and dangerous. The people of Mexico are keeping the building and visitors safe. Today, visitors are not allowed to climb the steps.

It is still fun to visit the city, though.  
Twice a year, many people come to see  
a special show. On those two days,  
the Sun makes shadows on the castle.  
The shadows look like a snake on the  
side of the stairs!

Visitors can only see this snake once  
in the fall and once in the spring.





There are about twelve statues like this one at Chichén Itzá. Scientists are still learning why they were important to Maya people.

## **A Wonderful Place**

Some of the most amazing Maya buildings are in Chichén Itzá. In fact, the city was chosen as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Maybe you will visit it one day!

## Glossary

- carved** (*adj.*) cut with care; made something, such as a statue, by having carefully cut and shaped stone or metal (p. 8)
- columns** (*n.*) posts used as support for a building (p. 8)
- Maya** (*n.*) a people of Central America and southern Mexico who built stone pyramids (p. 6)
- ruins** (*n.*) remains of an old or ruined building (p. 4)
- temples** (*n.*) buildings that are places to pray to a god (p. 12)
- wells** (*n.*) deep holes that are dug into the ground to get water, gas, or oil (p. 10)



# Words to Know

carved  
columns  
Maya

ruins  
temples  
wells

Front and back cover: "The castle" is the biggest building in Chichén Itzá.

Title page: Some buildings in Chichén Itzá have carvings at the top.

Page 3: Animal heads carved from stone are on many of the buildings in Chichén Itzá.

## Photo Credits:

Front cover, back cover, page 4: © Yann Arthus-Bertrand/Corbis; title page: © GTW/imageBROKER/Corbis; page 3: © Alexandre Fagundes De Fagundes/Dreamstime.com; page 6: © Inkaone/Dreamstime.com; page 7: © Han0747/Dreamstime.com; page 8: © imageBROKER/Alamy; page 9: © DC Premiumstock/Alamy; page 10: © Melvyn Longhurst/Melvyn Longhurst/Superstock; page 11: © Gold found in the Cenote, Chichen Itza, Mexico, Maya Post-Classic period (900–1300) (photo)/Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico/Jean-Pierre Courau/Bridgeman Images; page 12: © DeA Picture Library/The Granger Collection, NYC; page 13: © Michael T. Sedam/Corbis; page 14: © M. Timothy O'Keefe/Alamy; page 15: © Chac Mool, Post Classic Period (photo), Mayan/Chichen Itza, Yucatan State, Mexico/Photo: Oscar Alvarez/INAH/Bridgeman Images

Chichén Itzá  
World Landmarks  
Level L Leveled Book  
© Learning A–Z  
Written by Hannah Wheatley

All rights reserved.

www.readinga-z.com

## Correlation

LEVEL L	
Fountas & Pinnell	K
Reading Recovery	18
DRA	20

# Chichén Itzá

*A Reading A-Z Level L Leveled Book*

*Word Count: 506*

## Connections

### Writing

Imagine you took a trip to Chichén Itzá. Write a postcard home describing your experience. Be sure to include details from the book.

### Social Studies

Create an informational poster about Chichén Itzá, including images and facts about the landmark.



**Reading A-Z**

Visit [www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)  
for thousands of books and materials.