**Maya Astronomy**

Astronomy was extremely important to the Maya. Their view of the universe conceived of the heavens, the earth, and the underworld as parts of an integrated system. Human activities needed to follow certain patterns if the ***harmonious*** relationship was to continue. Astronomy told the Maya about the seasons and about when certain ***rituals*** should be performed and even predicted disasters and upheavals. Maya astronomy was passed along to the civilizations that followed, including the Aztecs.

The Maya believed that the sun, the moon, planets, and other celestial bodies represented various gods. They carefully monitored their movements across the sky. Each type of body was believed to reside in its own layer of the 13 levels of the heavens. Human sacrifices and prayers were necessary to strengthen the gods, such as the sun and the moon, as they journeyed each day. In return, the gods brought gifts to the earth such as rain.

Maya priest-astronomers studied the skies and recorded their observations. They recognized that most heavenly bodies changed their track across the sky on a daily basis. Mayan astronomers were most interested in where the heavenly bodies rose and set on the horizon on different dates. Thanks to their proficiency in mathematics, Maya astronomers developed two accurate calendars. The first was a ritual calendar with 13 months of 20 days each. This calendar was apparently based on the cycles of the moon. The second calendar was a solar one and had 365 days. The Maya realized that the two calendars would have the same starting date every 52 years. This ending of this cycle was viewed as a time of great change and uncertainty. Later civilizations in Mesoamerica adopted the Maya calendars…

Watts, Timothy J. "Maya astronomy." *World History: Ancient and Medieval Eras*. ABC-CLIO, 2014. Web. 5 May 2014.

**Vocabulary:** *harmonious:*to get along,*ritual:* religious ceremonies

1a. The Greek root **ast** means star. How does knowing the meaning of the Greek root help you to
 better understand the word astronomy on line 1? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1b. Which words on lines 2-3 and lines 8-9 support your answer? Annotate the text by circling the
 words that best support the answer.

2. The word *celestial* is used on line 8. Using words from lines 8-9, come up with a definition for
 *celestial*. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. The word *bodies* on line 8 has multiple meanings. What does this word often mean? How is it used
 differently in this context? Underline the words in lines 8-12 that support your answer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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4. What did Mayan priests do? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. What did they create from their work? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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6. Using evidence from the text, explain how the study of astronomy impacted the accomplishments
 of the Maya. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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