

The Mayans

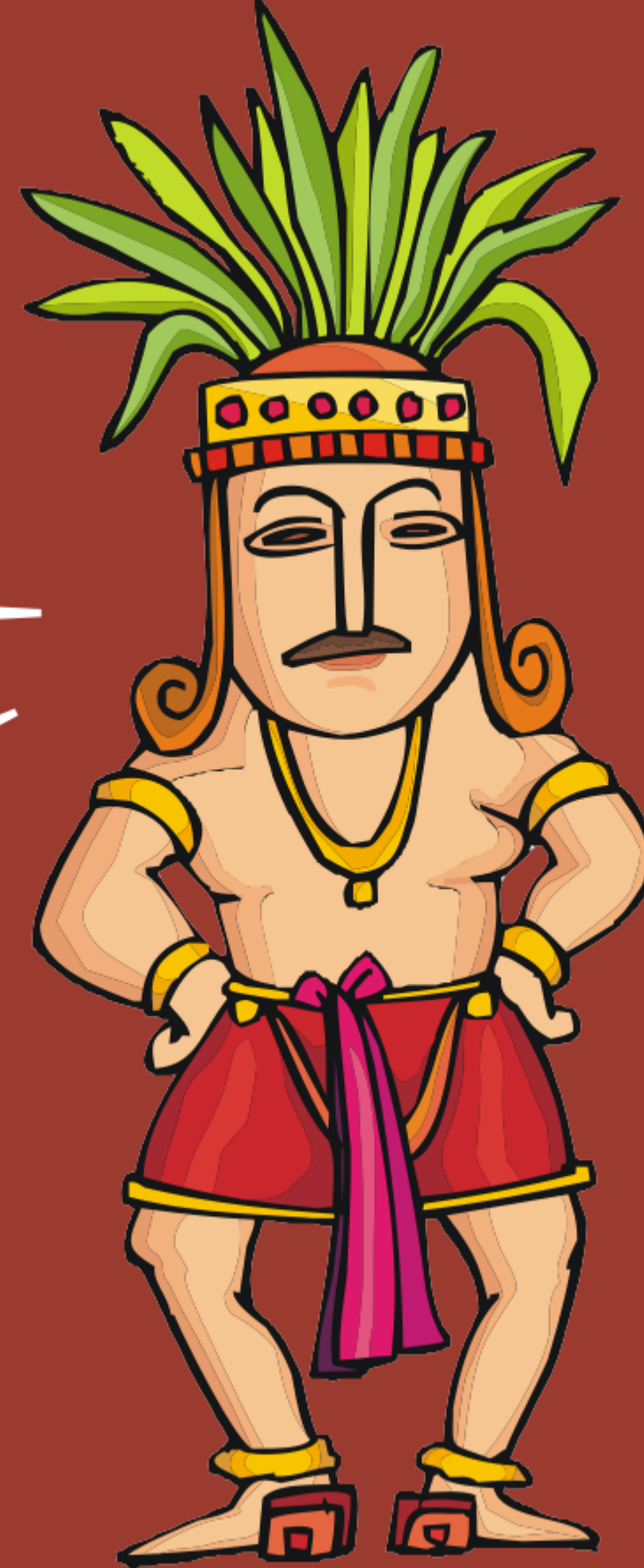
LO: to find out about the city states of the Mayans and how society was organised.

How is our society run?

Who makes our decisions?

Who is in charge?

How do they come to be in this position?



The United Kingdom has a constitutional monarchy. This means that we have a king or queen who reigns over the country. However, it is the government that makes the decisions and rules the country. The Prime Minister is in charge of the government.



This picture shows the Houses of Parliament where the MPs meet to decide how the country should be run.

Our society is a democracy. This means that the people can vote for who they want to be in power.

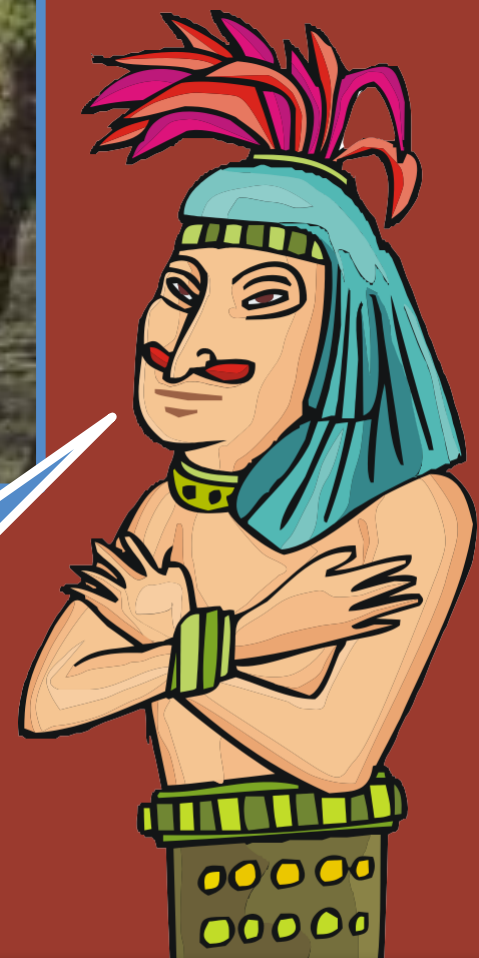


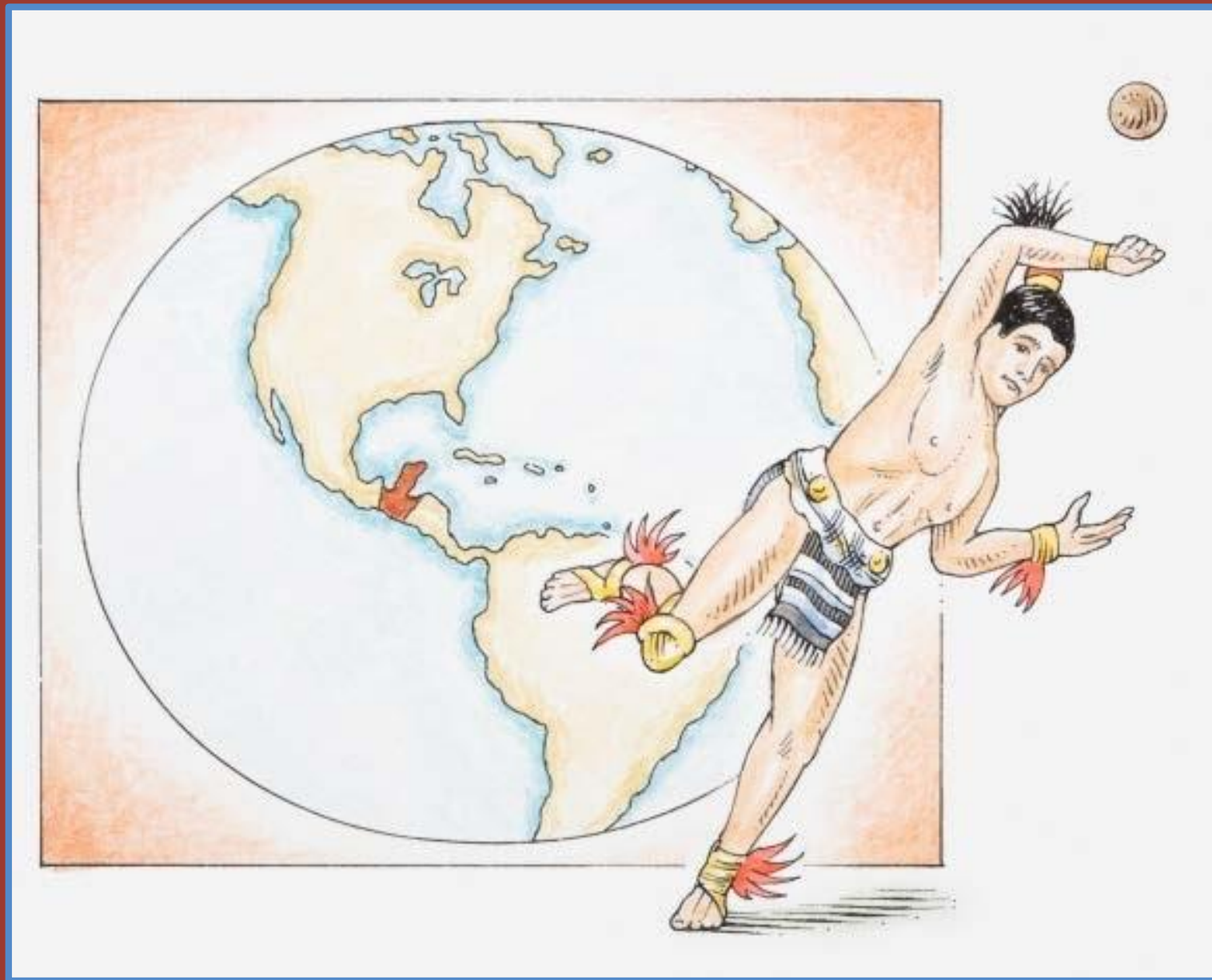
Do you think Mayan society was organised in the same way as British society or do you think it was different? Why?

Mayan society was organised into city states. Each city had its own king who was in complete control over his subjects. The king had nobles to help him control and run the city state. This type of society is known as an absolute monarchy.



This picture shows a statue of Tecun Uman, one of the last kings of the Mayans.





This map shows some of the major Mayan city states. Each city state had its own king. City states would trade with each other but would also go to war frequently to try to gain power, wealth and glory for their city state.



king

nobles and priests

palace officials

merchants and craftsmen

farmers

labourers

slaves

What do you think the role of each of these groups of people was?

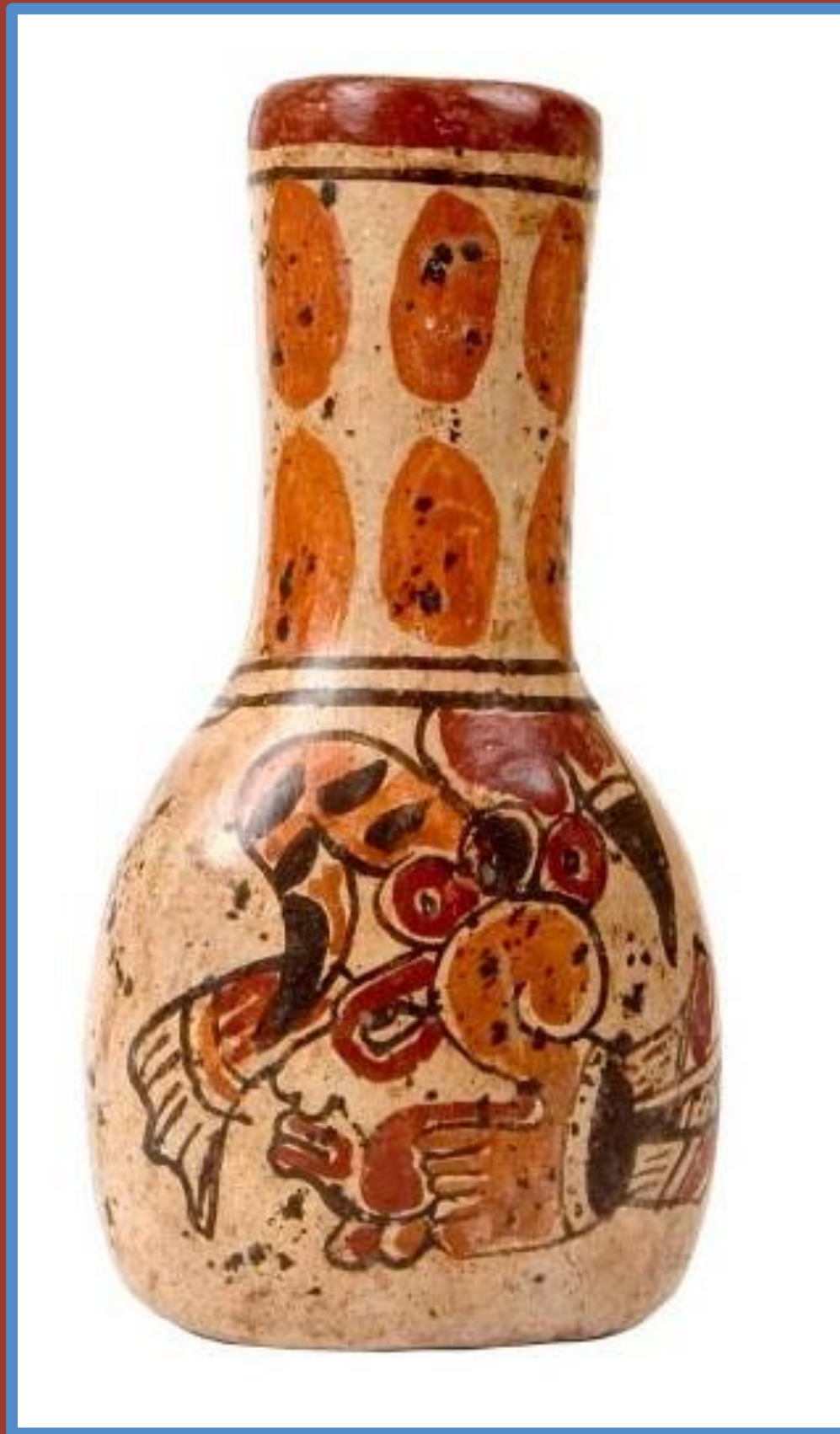
Mayan society was structured a bit like a pyramid. The higher up the pyramid you were, the more important you were.

Mayan kings were the most important people in the city state. They lived in fine palaces, ate the best foods, wore the best clothes and did all they could to show their wealth and importance. The Mayans believed that kings were chosen by the gods. This meant that the king's orders and wishes always had to be obeyed.

This picture shows a stele of one of the kings of Quirigua.

The nobles and priests were very important in Mayan society. It was these people who were educated and were the scribes and astrologers. They were wealthy and lived in grand houses. Palace officials were important people too. They were in charge of the day-to-day running of the city.





A Mayan earthenware vase.

Craftsmen included anyone who had a skilled job, such as a stonemason, tailor, potter, woodcarver or jewellery maker. Merchants bought and sold goods at markets.



Gold and jade stone were prized by the Mayans, who used them to make jewellery.

Most ordinary people in Mayan society were farmers. They usually lived in small settlements outside of the city. These people lived simple lives and had little status in society.

Mayan farmers grew crops such as corn, sunflower seeds and cotton.





Labourers and slaves had little power and were the least 'important' people in society. They did all the hard manual labour that was needed to build temples and other buildings. They were poor and always had to do as they were told.



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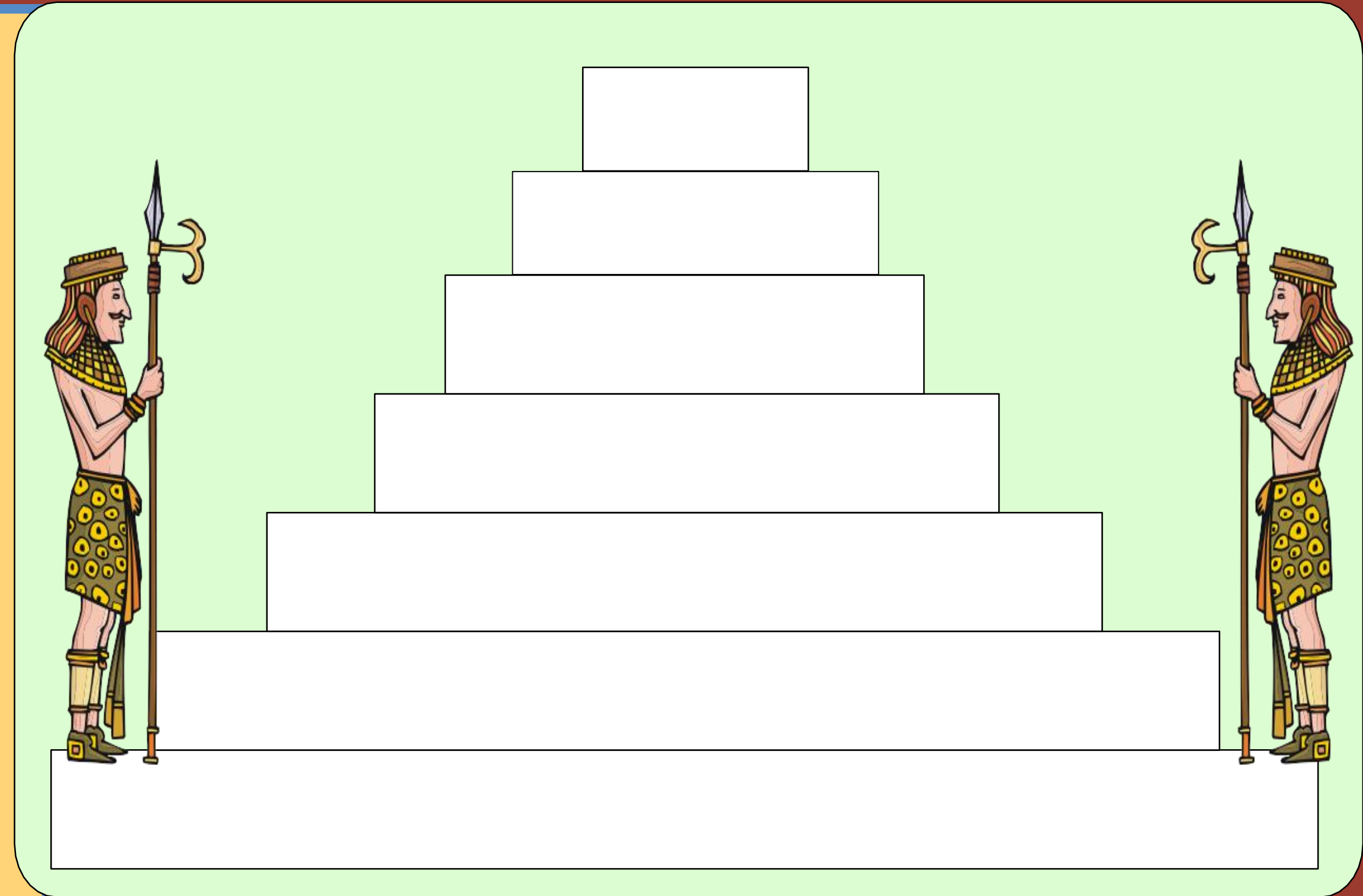
slaves

Which of these groups of people do you think had the best life in Mayan society? Why?

Task 1: Using the clues, create a pyramid with each group of people in the correct order. Next write a short description about the role of each group.

Clues

- 1) Those with the least status in Mayan society were the **slaves**.
- 2) With equal importance were the **nobles and priests**.
- 3) The **king** was the most powerful person.
- 4) **Farmers** had more status than labourers but were less important than merchants.
- 5) Less important than palace officials were **merchants and craftsmen**.
- 6) More important than palace officials were **priests**.
- 7) Just above slaves on the social scale were **labourers**.



Task 2:

1. How do you think the life of a slave would have been different to the life of a priest?
2. How do you think the life of a craftsman would have been different to the life of a labourer?
3. Which of these groups of people would you have most liked to have been? Why ?

Extra: Create a word search.

On a 15 x 15 square grid, choose ten city states to create a word search for a friend to solve!

Make sure your spellings are accurate!



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