

# The Mayans

Learning Objective:

To explore the concept of hierarchy and relate this to everyday life.

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Who was in charge of Mayan society?



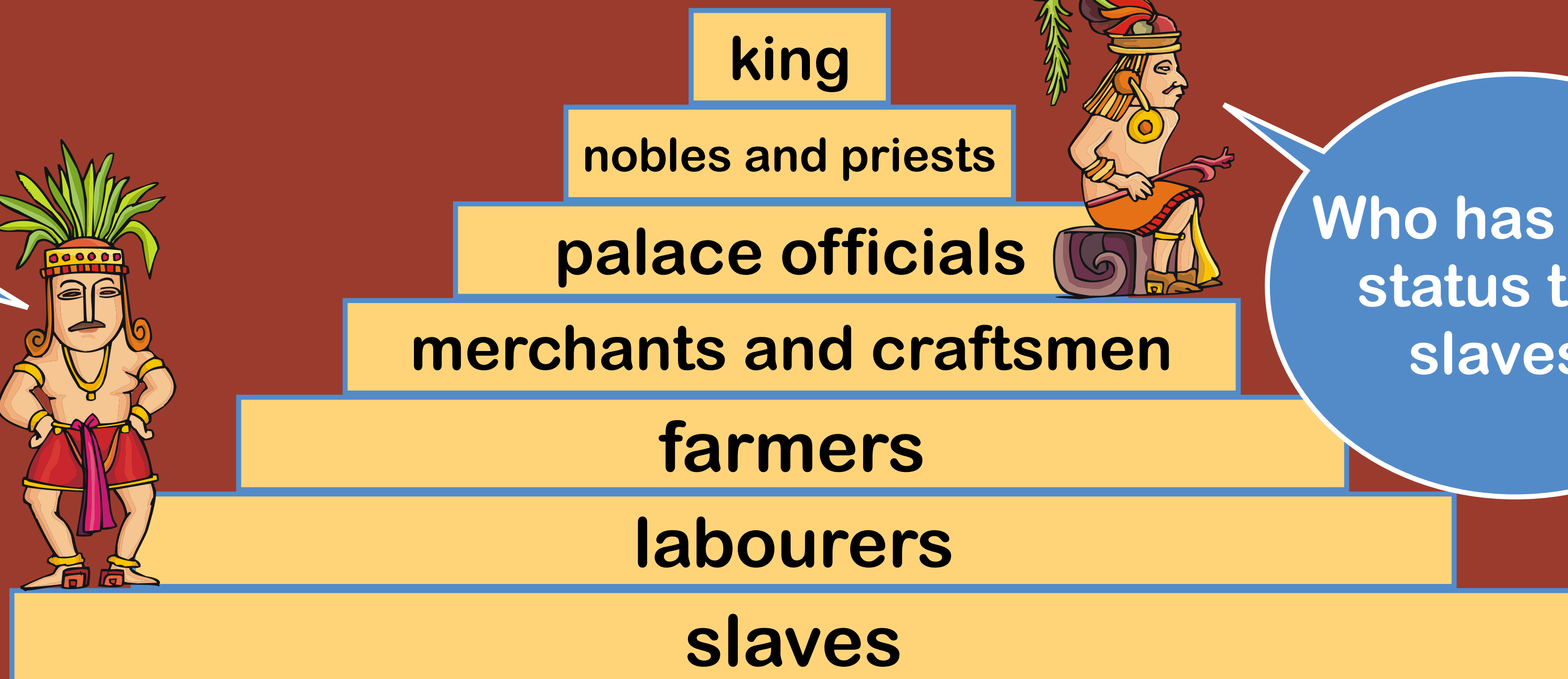
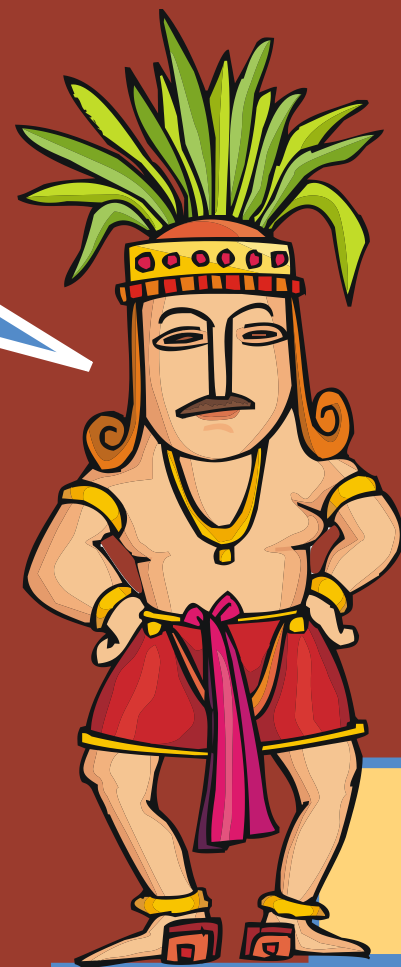
Who was the most important person?

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A hierarchy is a system in which groups of people are ranked according to how important they are. The Mayans had a hierarchy which included a king at the top, followed by other groups of people, such as nobles and priests, with farmers, labourers and slaves at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Who has more status than merchants? Who has less status than priests?



Who has more status than slaves?

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Do we have the same kind of hierarchy in our society as the Mayans did?

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We have similar hierarchies in our society today but they are not quite the same as Mayan hierarchies. Our society is a **democracy** which means that the people can vote for who they want to be in control of running the country. People vote for a political party. At an **election**, whichever party has the most votes will be in charge of the **government**. The party will have a leader who then becomes **prime minister**.



Liberal  
Democrats



Conservatives



Do you know who our prime minister is today?



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Mayan rulers were kings who had complete control over everything. The king could do as he pleased and everyone was expected to obey him. Today, our monarchy helps the government to run the country but has no power to make changes without the consent of parliament. The monarchy is still very important and has a lot of status.



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Every adult over the age of 18 in the United Kingdom can vote for who they want to run the country. In Mayan society, only the king, with the advice of his nobility, would have decided the laws.



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Mayan kings could rule as they pleased but they still had a responsibility to make sure they were leading their people wisely, just as today's leaders do. Being a leader does not just mean doing what you want but making sure that the people you are leading will be safe, secure and happy. This is not always an easy job.



Being a leader sometimes means making decisions that not everyone will agree with for the good of the people. Can you think of any examples?

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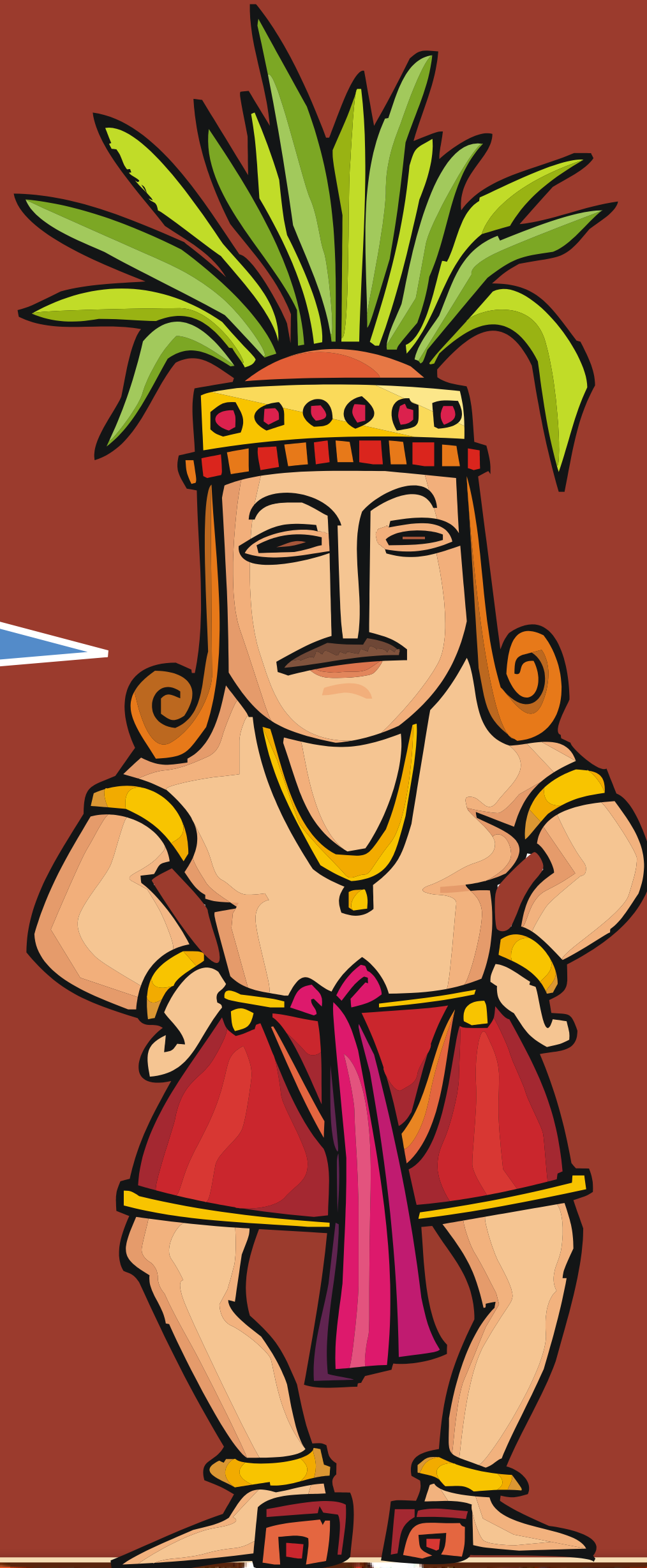
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Even though every adult in our society is important, some people have jobs or titles that give them more status than others. There is a hierarchy in a hospital, for example, in which doctors are above nurses and other hospital staff. This does not mean that doctors are more important than nurses but that doctors are higher up in the chain of command. They have a different set of training and skills that make them the best people to lead the rest of the hospital staff, giving them a high status.

Do we have a hierarchy at school?  
Who is in charge? Why?



What do you think would happen if we didn't have a hierarchy at school?



Who would make the rules?

Do you think it would work?

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