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## **Comparing Environmental Challenges: Maya Civilization vs. Today**

The Maya civilization flourished at a time when the world was still rich in natural resources. However, despite being archaeologically and culturally rich, the Maya civilization collapsed. While there are many theories that point out possible reasons of the collapse, the environment played a huge role in the fall down of a once prosperous civilization.

Studies reveal that the Mayans could have probably exploited the environment to the point it could no longer sustain a growing Mayan population. The Mayans depended on agriculture, fishing, and some cattle farming, and naturally, as the area became progressive, the population grew as well. To respond to the needs of a growing population, they learned agricultural techniques that helped drain wetlands for planting, terracing, and water replenishment methods that will help them store water for use in times of drought. However, as the population grew, the need to plant more crops became inevitable and crop rotation became an impossible option, thus, instead of giving the soil time to rest and replenish its nutrients, soil content must have destroyed the land leading to famine, thus, the shortage of food for the inhabitants.

Another theory is climate change that made the Maya civilization vulnerable to droughts and floods that had direct impact on their food supply. Some areas were above sea level and during the rainy season, rain water in these areas ran straight to the land and leaving less to no surface water. For those in the low levels of the land, they dug sink holes to trap water and create water reservoirs that would last the farmers and their families until the next

rainfall season. In addition, as farmers' response to the growing need for food, there was also a need to cut down on trees and transform other land areas to agricultural land.

It may seem like the Maya was often unable to overcome their challenges because although they were culturally rich as evidenced by the temples they built, they had a weak central political authority. They were generally known as a peaceful society, but later research showed that they also engaged in wars among Mayan city-states, where torture and human sacrifice were practiced. There is also evidence that the Mayan society had exhausted the use of the environment and its natural resources because of overpopulation. These events are very much similar to the early environmental issues that Los Angeles experienced in the 1900s since both the Maya civilization and the early Los Angeles settlers depended on nature for subsistence. Without regard to their surroundings and the natural resources, both used up the available resources that resulted to its exploitation and subsequent deforestation. Furthermore, as in the case of LA, industrialization and commercialization added to the problem as new issues rose, including urbanization and pollution. As the area became highly urbanized, inhabitants began fighting over resources as well.

Contemporary global environmental challenges differ from those faced by Maya in the sense that now, environmental problems arise due to overexposure to industrialization and technology that harm the environment. In the past, there was no pollution to speak of unlike now where urban cities suffer from various kinds of pollution - air, water, sound - caused by manufacturing companies and factories that emit poisonous gas in the air

and water, among others.

Now, environmental challenges are addressed by initiating environmental policies on how to use and care for the environment. With sectors of society creating movements to protect the environment, educate people about climate change, provide instructions on proper resource allocation, and alert people about the harmful effects of pollution to human, animal, and vegetative health, the world has a better chance of surviving the environmental threats.

The problems that the United States faces are still unpretentious if compared with what is happening around the world, but the nation shares the same issues as overpopulation and environmental degradation and devastation as the others. In some instances, diseases and illnesses are even brought about by environmental problems that we face now, such as cholera, malaria, and other insect-borne diseases. All nations are interconnected by seas and the same skies, thus, if one area of the world does not do its share to protect its resources, someday, even those living in far-away areas will experience the same problems these countries are faced with.