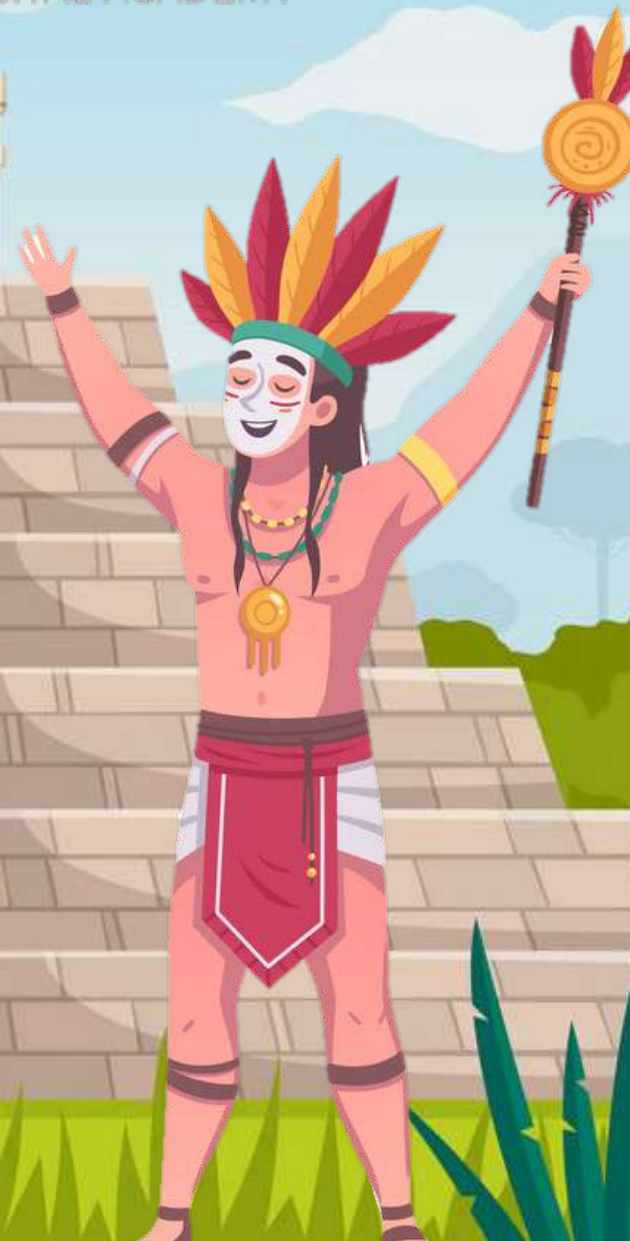




# Tales of Ancient Worlds

Ancient Empires





We've now come forward in time to around 2000 years ago. In Europe and Africa, the Roman Empire spread its tentacles across the land.

In Asia, nomadic horsemen were on the march from the borders of China to the Caucasus Mountains. In the Americas, they were building: from the huge pyramids of the Maya, to the largest snake in the entire world.

**Adventure awaits!**





# The Kingdom of the Maya





In the heart of Central America was one of the most fascinating civilisations to have ever existed. A land of tall pyramids, powerful rulers, and ancient astronomers. The world of the Maya! Let's take a look at the archaeology of these ancient cities as we explore what made the Maya civilisation so unique.





## Maya Civilisation

The Maya lived in a very tropical region, full of dense jungles, home to animals like the jaguar. There were many Maya cities and they were frequently at war with each other.



## Rulers

Each Maya city had a ruler who lived in a palace in the centre of town. They had to participate in sacred rituals on behalf of their people, some of which included the spilling of human blood.





## Writing System

The Maya developed a writing system made of different pictures called glyphs. Through these we can learn loads about Maya society.





## Corn God

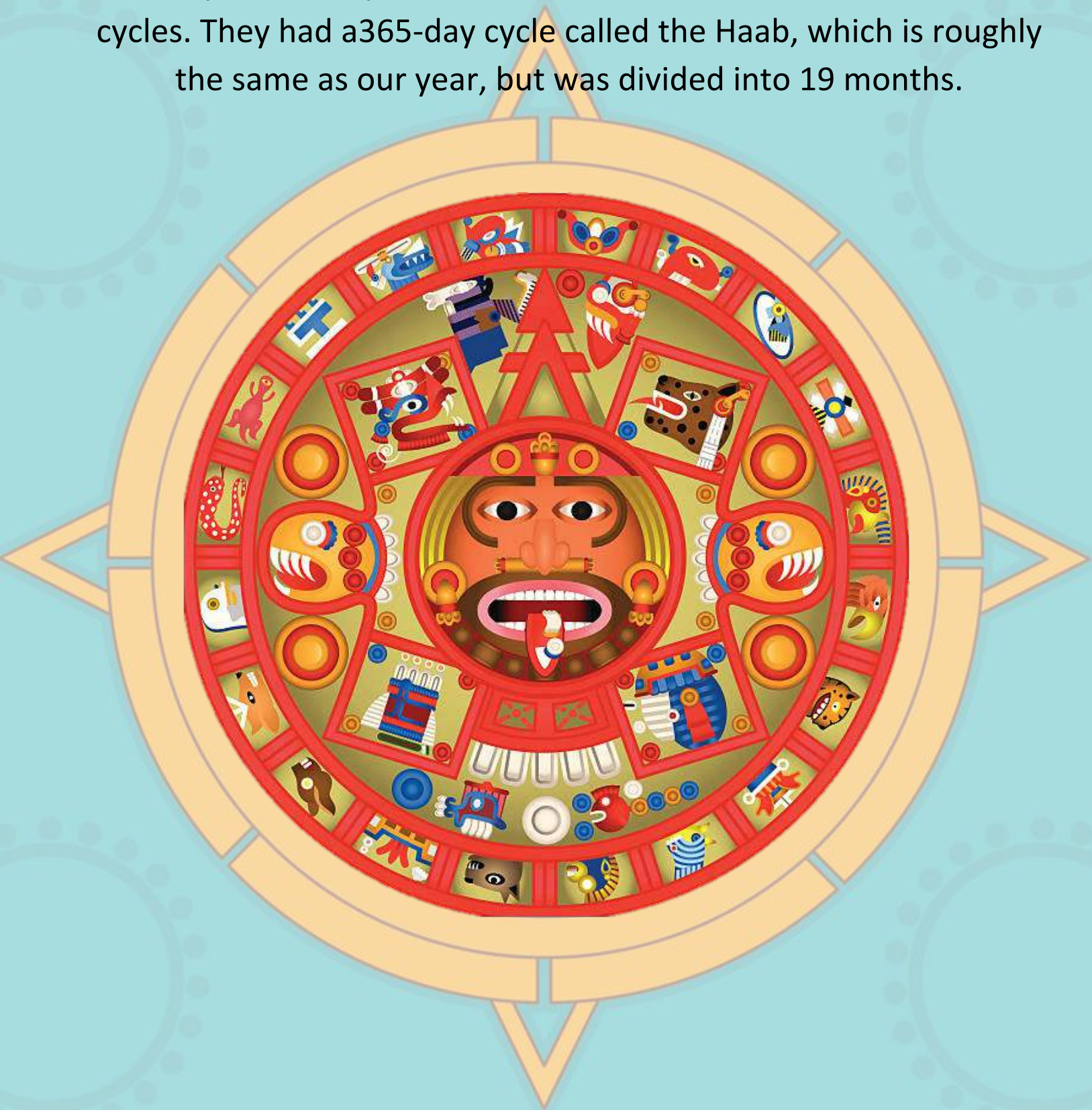
Hun Hunahpu was the Maya god of maize (aka corn). According to Maya religion, his blood and corn were what made human life possible. He wasn't the only god though. The Maya worshipped many deities, such as Chac the rain god and Kisin -- "the flatulant one" the god of death and decay.





# Calendar

The Maya had a sophisticated calendar that consisted of different cycles. They had a 365-day cycle called the Haab, which is roughly the same as our year, but was divided into 19 months.





## Women

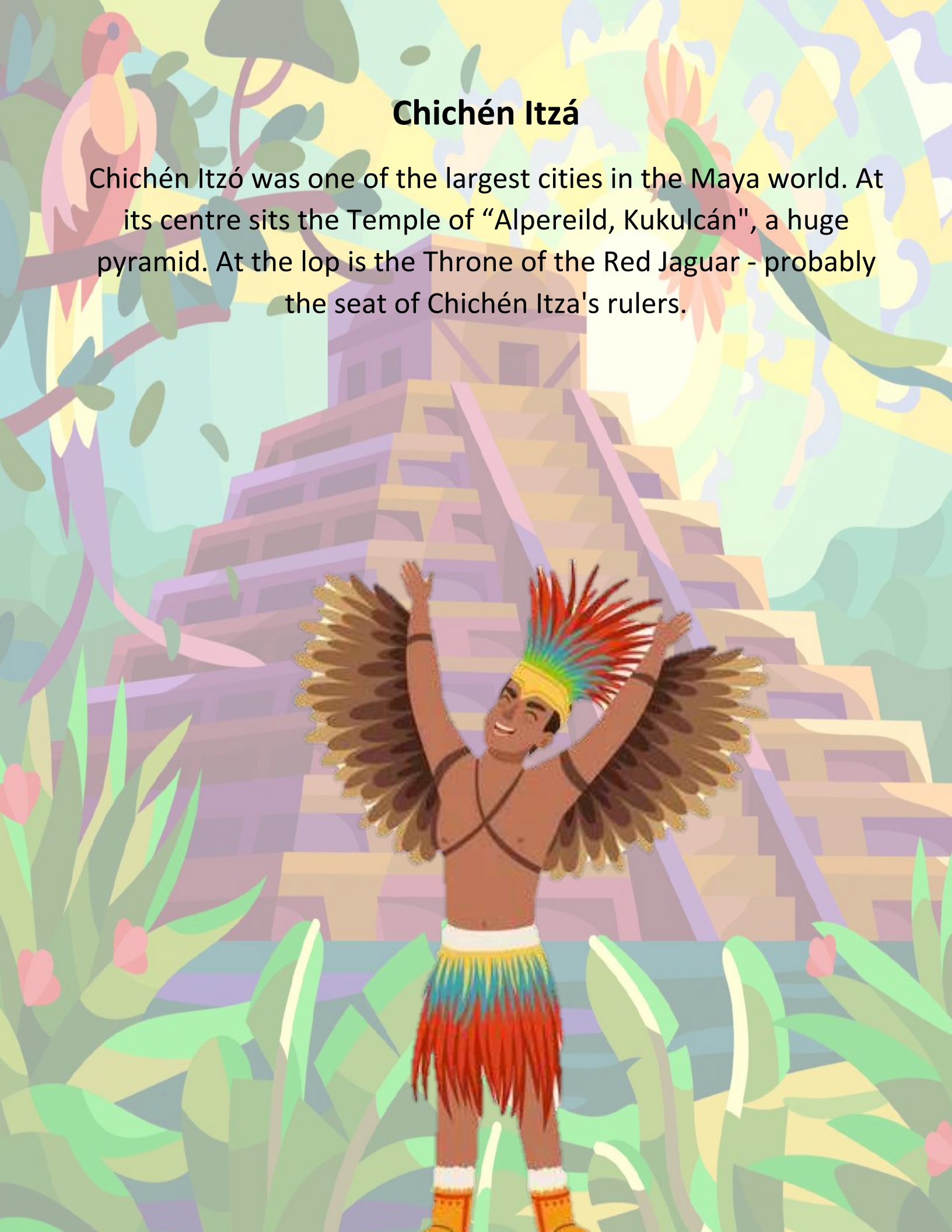
Women had an important role in Maya society, producing textiles and food, and participating in religious ceremonies. Unfortunately they are rarely mentioned in texts, but we know some women would become queens of Maya cities, such as Lady Wac Chanil Aha of Naranjo.





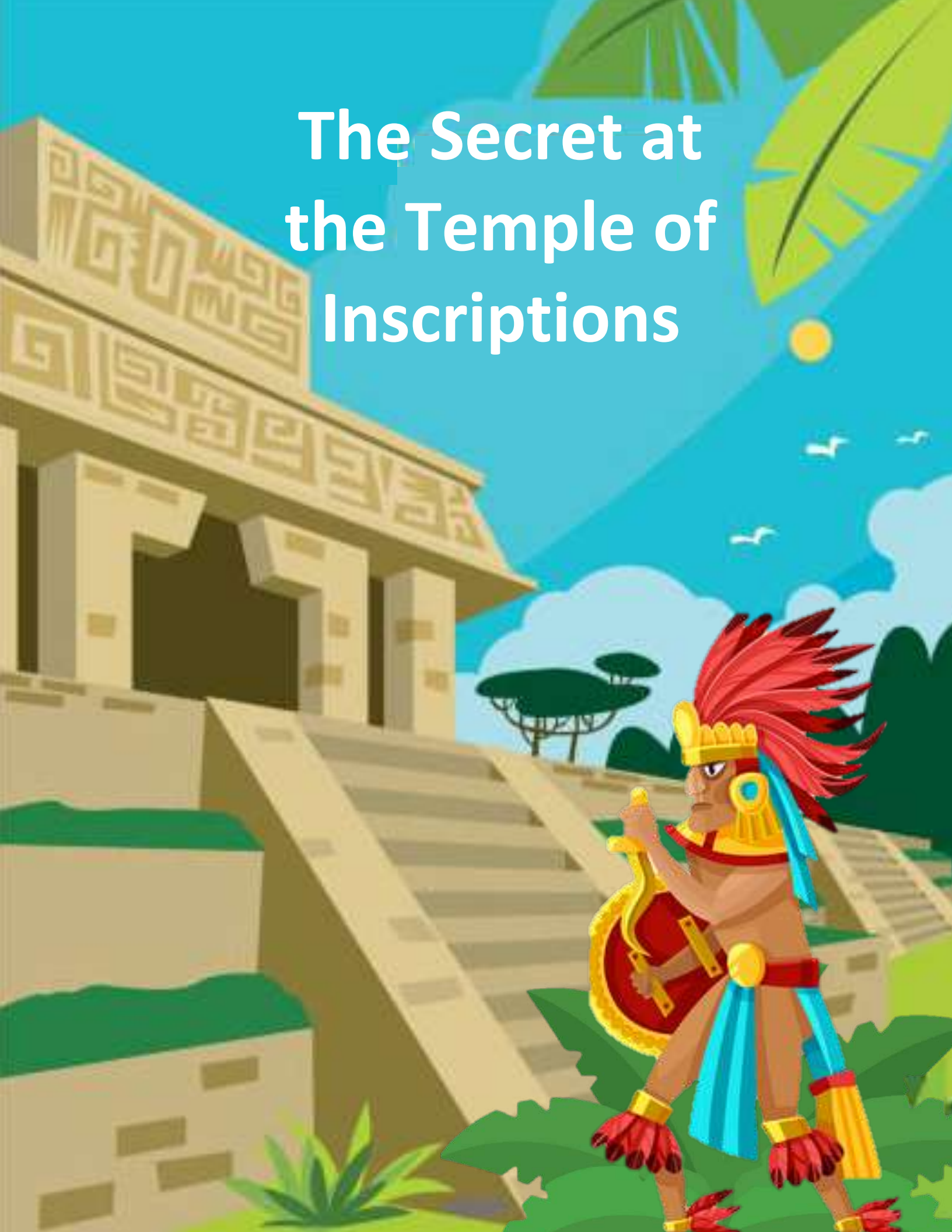
## Chichén Itzá

Chichén Itzá was one of the largest cities in the Maya world. At its centre sits the Temple of "Alpereiild, Kukulcán", a huge pyramid. At the top is the Throne of the Red Jaguar - probably the seat of Chichén Itza's rulers.





# The Secret at the Temple of Inscriptions

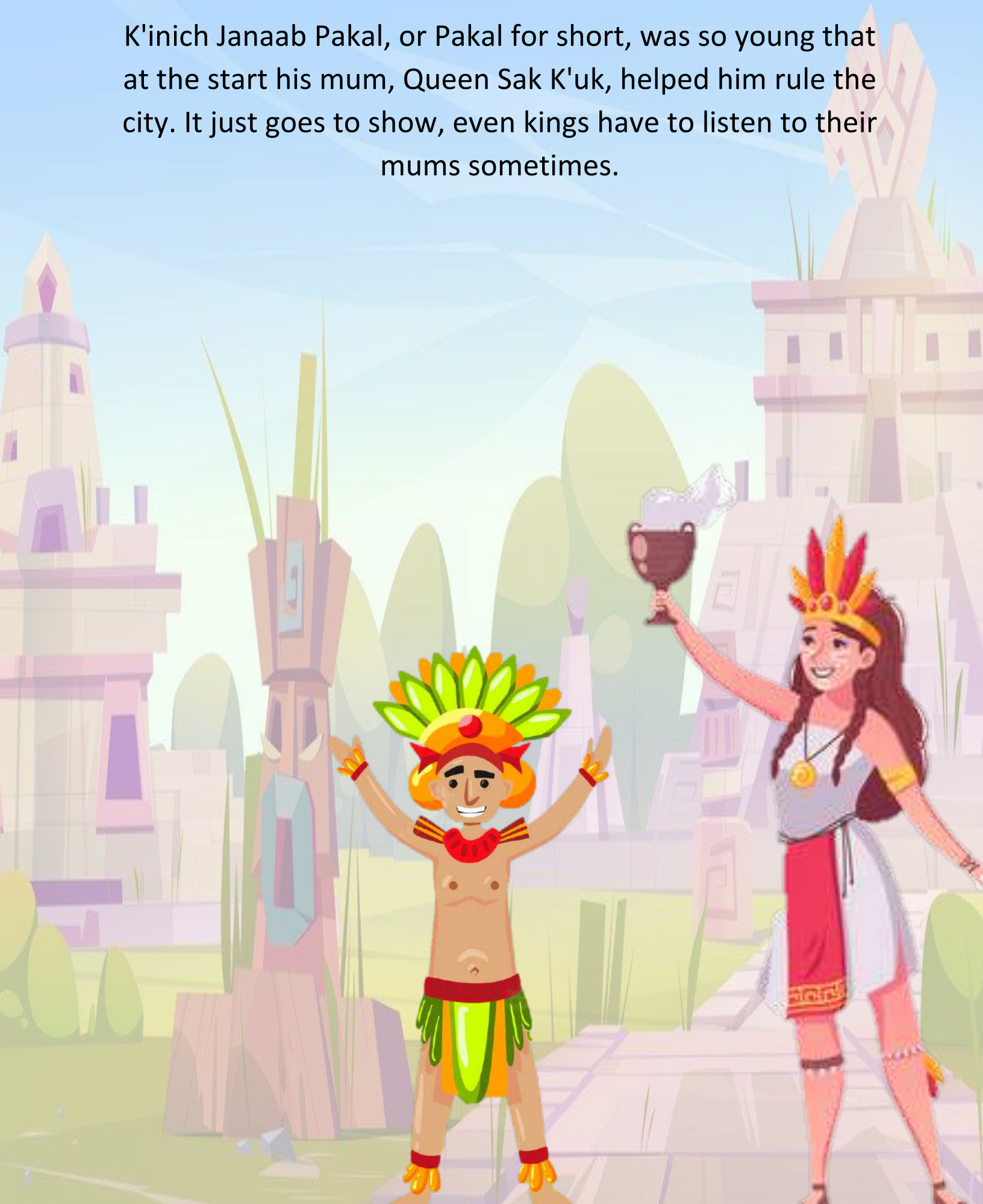


Deep in the sweltering jungle of south Mexico there was once a great bustling city called Palenque. It was one of the most important cities in all of ancient Maya civilisation. In 615 CE, Palenque was about to get a new ruler. But there was something a bit different about this king - he was only 12 years old!





K'inich Janaab Pakal, or Pakal for short, was so young that at the start his mum, Queen Sak K'uk, helped him rule the city. It just goes to show, even kings have to listen to their mums sometimes.



The Maya loved art, science, and sports. From Pakal's palace he could watch two teams play a popular game with a rubber ball in a giant stone court.





A bit like a mix between football and basketball, it was not for the faint-hearted - sometimes the losers were executed. Players were highly skilled, using their hips to manoeuvre the ball through stone hoops high up on the sides of the court.



When Pakal became king the city of Palenque was in trouble. They had just lost a war and Pakal's father had died. Pakal proved a wise ruler, though. He built a brand-new palace and several impressive temples. Not only that, but he knew how to win a battle. In the year 659 CE, Pakal defeated the rulers of six other cities and Palenque became the most powerful kingdom in the region.

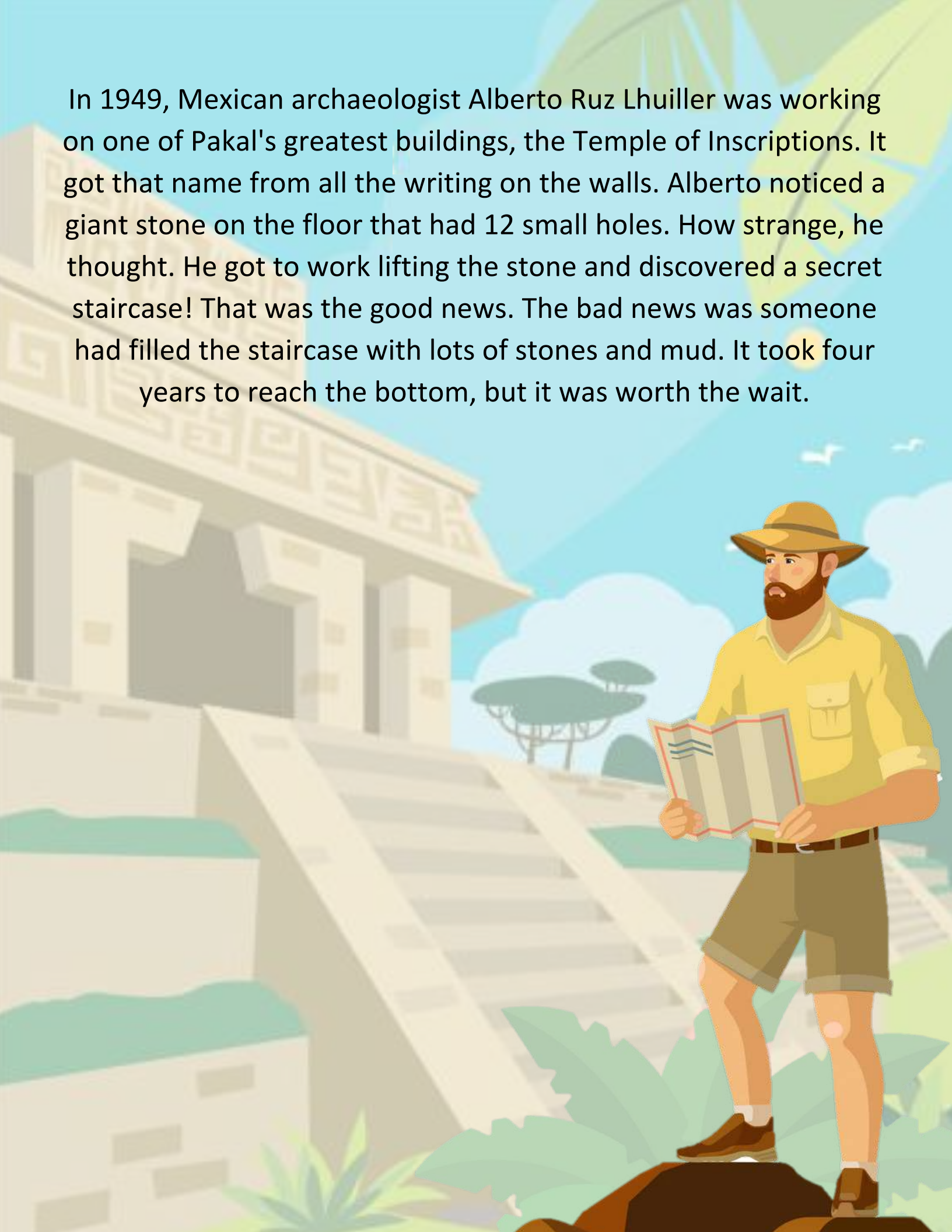




For years archaeologists battled mosquitoes and thick vines to explore the ruins of Palenque to try to discover more about Pakal's reign.



In 1949, Mexican archaeologist Alberto Ruz Lhuiller was working on one of Pakal's greatest buildings, the Temple of Inscriptions. It got that name from all the writing on the walls. Alberto noticed a giant stone on the floor that had 12 small holes. How strange, he thought. He got to work lifting the stone and discovered a secret staircase! That was the good news. The bad news was someone had filled the staircase with lots of stones and mud. It took four years to reach the bottom, but it was worth the wait.





After years of digging, Alberto made a fantastic discovery. The tomb of King Pakal himself!

King Pakal was buried in a massive stone sarcophagus (that's a big fancy box for dead people).





On the front was a picture of Pakal, dressed as the god of corn. Corn was the most important food for the Maya and they ate it every day.





Inside the sarcophagus was the king, wearing a beautiful mask made from a green stone called jade. Rich Maya loved this stone and Pakal was no different.



Alberto realised it was possible to take the lid off Pakal's sarcophagus, meaning the dead king's body was probably brought out for special occasions.





You may think that taking a dead body to a party sounds surprising, but to the Maya, the king had a special connection to their gods and ancestors. Even after the king was dead, he was still loved and respected. From reading the writing on the wall and the tomb, Alberto discovered that Pakal had built the temple when he was 70 years old. He had lived to the ripe old age of 81, and had been king for a staggering 63 years! No longer a child king, he had become the legend Pakal the Great.





# THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY

