



## 23.5 Religious Beliefs and Practices

Use the outline of El Caracol observatory in Chichen Itza to create a spoke diagram. For each spoke, list at least two important pieces of information about each of these aspects of Mayan religious beliefs and practices:

- Mayan gods
- offerings and sacrifices
- pok-a-tok
- the Sacred Round

Possible answers:

**Pok-a-tok**

- This is a ball game played by two teams of nobles.
- Players tried to hit a rubber ball through a stone hoop using their elbows, wrists, and hips.
- Members of the losing team may have been sacrificed.

**Offerings and Sacrifices**

- The Maya made offerings of plants, food, flowers, feathers, jade, and shells.
- Animals and sometimes humans were sacrificed.
- In Chichen Itza, humans were sacrificed by being thrown into a sacred well.

**The Sacred Round**

- The Maya's knowledge of astronomy and math allowed them to develop a complex calendar system.
- The Sacred Round was made up of two cycles. One cycle was made up of the numbers 1 to 13; the other had 20 day names.
- The Sacred Round was used to determine the best days to plant, do battle, perform religious ceremonies, and many other activities.

**Mayan Gods**

- The Maya believed in more than 160 gods.
- Primary gods were the god of rain, the god of corn, and the god of death.
- The jaguar was an important animal in the Mayan religion.

