# Quiz A: RI.3.3

Read the passage. Then answer the following questions.

"Meet The Maya"

1 Take a journey back nearly 3,000 years in time. Around 900 BCE, a group of people called the Maya formed a splendid and advanced civilization in the area between the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of Honduras. They had magnificent palaces, an elaborate system of writing, an accurate calendar, and more.

2 The Maya had advanced scientific knowledge of astronomy. They were able to plot the movements of the sun and moon. They tracked the movement of stars and planets across the sky and were able to accurately predict events such as solar and lunar eclipses. They even calculated the length of one revolution of Venus around the sun. They believed it took 584 days. After many centuries of study, today's scientists find it to be 583.92 days!

3 The Mayan system of recording time is the most accurate calendar of the ancient world. Ancient Mayan astronomers calculated of the length of one year on Earth as 365.4240 days. The figure used today, more than 1,000 years later, is 365.2422 days! That is an impressively close calculation, made without the help of modern scientific tools.

4 Mayan mathematics was equally amazing. The Maya invented a numerical system based on 20 (ours is based on 10). They were one of three civilizations that understood the concept of zero. This allowed them to be one of the first peoples to be able to count to very large numbers.

5 The Maya created and invented many things. They built pyramids. They had medicines. They made weapons and tools of sharp minerals, not metal. They developed sophisticated water-delivery systems, with waterways that supplied water to all the communities. This helped improve farming techniques and the ability to provide food to a large population.

6 The Maya also developed a complex system of writing. The system had an alphabet as well as symbols that represented whole words or thoughts.

7 The Maya used writing tools made from animal hair and feathers. Writing was recorded in books called codices. These books were long strips of paper made from the bark of fig trees. The strips of bark were then folded back to back, forming pages. These were then enclosed in covers of animal skin or wood. In 1973, a young boy, the child of two archaeologists, started to draw the symbols, or glyphs, he saw on stone tablets. Then he started to study and decode them. Three years later, as a teenager, he was able to read many of the tablets—something that had taken scholars five years to do!

8 The Maya painted and adorned their buildings with carvings. The carvings show gods and histories of ruling families. They also painted colorful murals on interior walls.

9 Mayan civilization flourished for many centuries. In the 16th century, Spanish explorers came to the area and conquered the Mayan people and their glorious culture. Most of that culture lay hidden for years. It took archaeologists a long time to discover this fascinating civilization. One reason is that the Spanish forbade foreigners to travel in its colonies. Another reason is that much of the Mayan land is hard to reach because of dense rain forests and mountains.

10 Dedicated people spent years unearthing what has become the lost culture of the ancient Maya. By studying what remains of their art and architecture, we can continue to learn more about the people of the ancient world.

1. Why did it take archaeologists a long time to discover the Mayan civilization?

   A. The Spanish forbade foreigners to travel in its colonies.
   B. The archaeologists did not like to explore unknown areas.
   C. The Spanish refused to finance the archaeologists.
   D. The archaeologists thought the legends of the Maya were not true.

2. What did the Mayan's water-delivery systems enable them to do?

   A. travel long distances by boat
   B. provide food to a large population
   C. have bathrooms in houses
   D. send messages via waterways

3. Which of the following allowed the Maya to count very large numbers?

   A. They used the slide rule.
   B. They used the decimal system.
   C. They understood the concept of geometry.
   D. They understood the concept of zero.