The decline of the Mayan civilisation

Historians learned a lot about the Maya from the records they left behind but around the year 900 AD, the records disappeared and the cities vanished from history. The Mayan city states were abandoned and weren’t discovered again until the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the sixteenth century.

No one knows exactly why the great Mayan cities fell into decline. Here are some of the theories:

- Disease wiped everyone out
- There was a drought, causing crops to fail and food to run out
- The Maya were conquered by neighbouring tribes
- A great battle killed too many of the population for the civilisation to continue
- A natural disaster killed everyone

Which do you think is most likely?

Despite the fall of the great cities, the Mayan civilisation didn’t end completely. Small groups of Maya continued to live in the rainforests and volcanic mountains of Mesoamerica. These people kept the Mayan culture and traditions; the Maya still live in the region today.

Task: Write a convincing argument in less than 100 words on which theory you think is correct and why. Use what you have learnt about the Ancient Maya to support your ideas.