

CHOCOLATE IN BRAZIL

The cacao tree has been cultivated in Central and South America since ancient times when a highly prized drink was extracted from the beans. Cocoa, from which chocolate is made, is thought to have originated in the Amazon at least 4,000 years ago and was certainly used by the Maya people as early as the sixth century AD. The Mayan people called the cocoa tree *cacahuaquchtl* and the word 'chocolate' probably comes from the Maya word *xocoatl* meaning 'bitter water'. The Aztecs attributed the creation of the cocoa plant to their god Quetzalcoatl who descended from heaven on the beam of a morning star carrying a cocoa tree stolen from paradise.

The Latin name for the cocoa or cacao tree is *Theobroma cacao*, meaning 'food of the gods' (*Theo* meaning 'god' and *broma* meaning 'food'). The lack of wind and the soil in the rainforest is ideal for growing cacao trees though many diseases and pests attack the trees. The pods in which the cocoa beans grow are cut from the trees by hand, using machetes or knives.



Cacao Beans in Brazil

Why chocolate could poison your pet

Small animals and birds such as dogs, parrots and cats are unable to metabolise the chemical theobromine effectively, and it can remain in their bloodstream for hours and hours. If consumed in large doses, chocolate can bring about epileptic seizures in some dogs, and in all dogs, can kill, but only in large doses. White chocolate has the least amount of theobromine at 1 mg per ounce but milk chocolate contains 60 mg per ounce. Dark chocolate can have up to five times more theobromine than milk chocolate and so is more dangerous to small pets such as dogs. All poisoning is a matter of dosage per weight so don't worry, millions of pets all over the world can enjoy the odd chocolate and have no serious ill-effects.

Class project

Do some research on how the Quaker beliefs of Cadbury family led them to establish Bourneville, a town near Birmingham in England. What do you think about the facilities available to the workers in their new factory at Bourneville — imagine how unusual it was to have heated dressing rooms and kitchens for heating food and sports fields and even swimming pools in Victorian times!

Science and Technology – try designing your own village! Think about including facilities that would make life comfortable and enjoyable for all ages and all types of people.

