

Week 2 - History

The Mayans

Before we start:

In your originally home learning pack there was a lot of information and some activities relating to The Mayans. It might be a good idea to look at that now either to remind yourself if you have seen it already or give yourself a bit of background knowledge before continuing with this lesson.

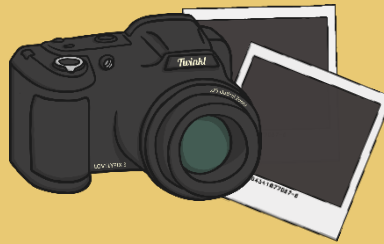
Let's get thinking! You could discuss these questions with someone at home or just jot down your own ideas:

1. How do we know about the history of the world?
2. Who finds out?
3. Where does this information come from?
4. How accurate do you think our understanding of the past is?
5. How do we know about the ancient Maya?

Using sources of evidence:

In order to paint an accurate picture of life in ancient Maya, historians have used a range of evidence sources to piece together the details, a bit like doing a jigsaw puzzle with each new piece of the puzzle revealing more information.

Primary sources
come directly from
the time of the
event e.g. a
photograph or an
artefact.



Secondary sources
are created after the
event and are often
created using
primary sources e.g.
a textbook.

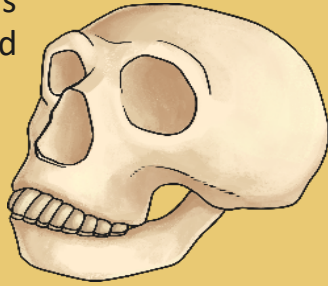


What types of evidence can you think of that could help us to understand the Maya better?

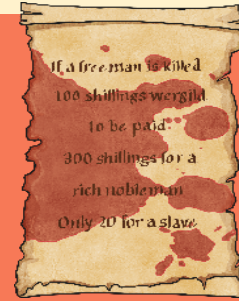
- What would these pieces of evidence tell us?
- Are they primary or secondary sources?

Here are some examples of the types of evidence we can use:

Archaeological: actual remains from the past dug up, analysed and interpreted.



Written: evidence from written records either from the time or recorded later.



Maps: written at the time or created later.



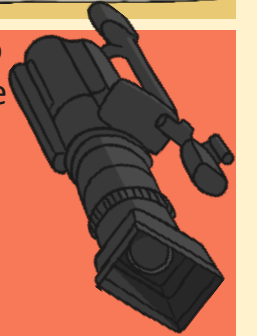
Artwork: e.g. paintings or sculptures, either from the time or later in history.



Letters and diaries: e.g. explorers or archaeologists documenting their findings.



Films and documentaries: created to piece together information about the past or to tell a story.



Stories, myths and legends: either written at the time or later in history.



Maya Explorers

American explorer and travel writer, John Lloyd Stephens and British artist, Frederick Catherwood are credited with re-igniting interest in the ancient Maya civilisation from 1839 onwards.

The ruins and lost cities of Mesoamerica had been explored and recorded earlier in history, but detailed documentation by Catherwood brought attention back to the Maya and their fascinating civilisation.

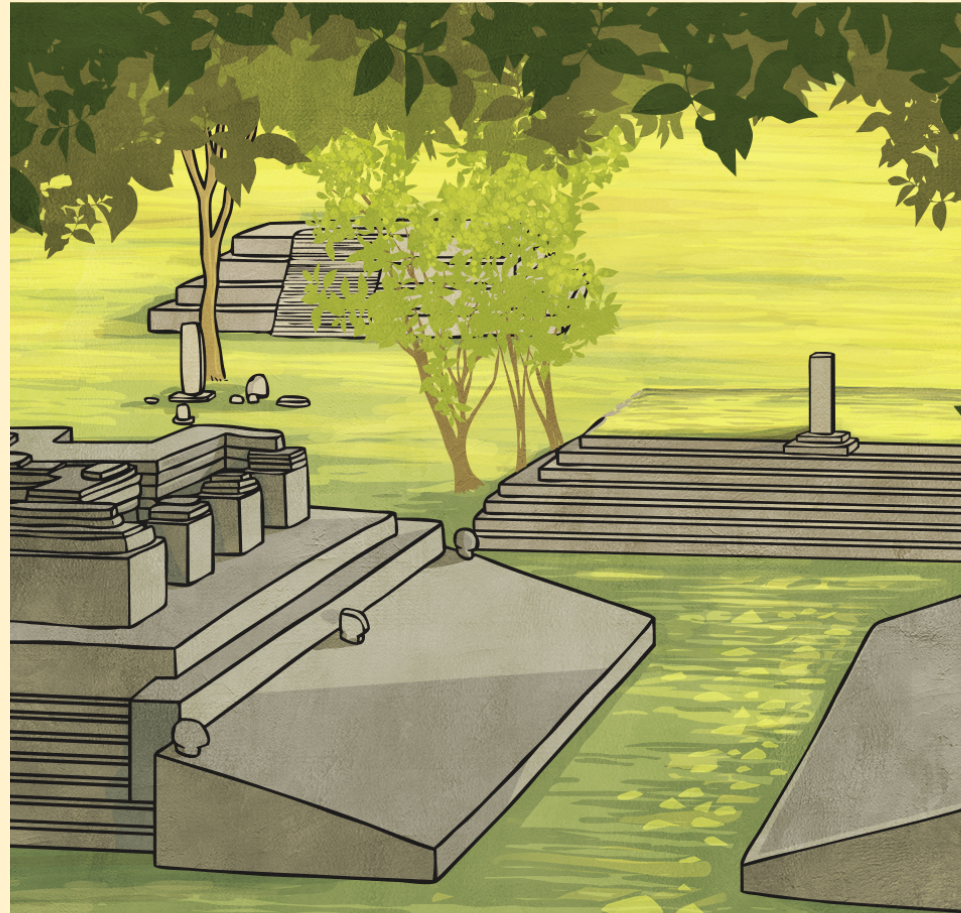
Numerous archaeological expeditions of the Maya region were launched following the work of Stephens and Catherwood.

Copan

The Maya city of Copan was the first to be explored by Stephens and Catherwood in 1839. In 1841, they published a book called *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* which detailed their findings in Copan and other places. The book contained maps, detailed drawings by Catherwood and text by Stephens.

Copan Facts:

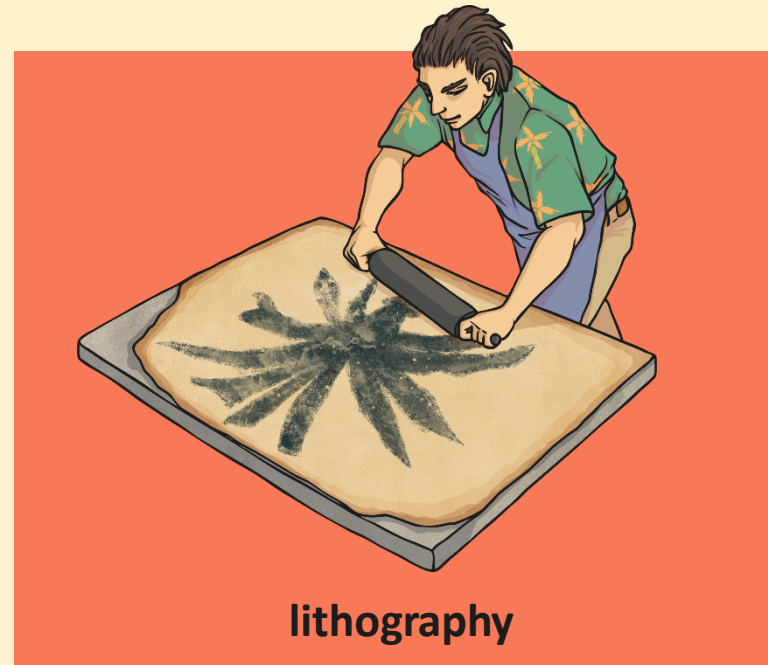
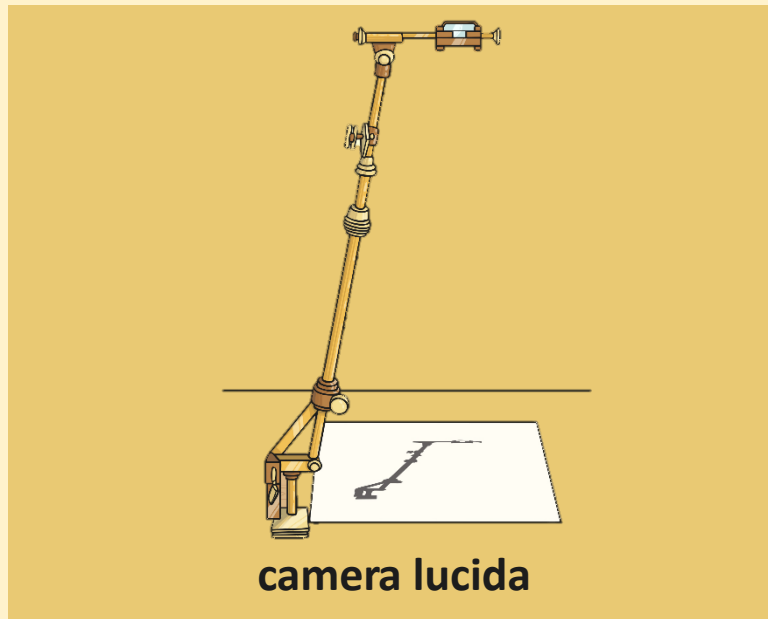
- Copan is in West Honduras near its border with Guatemala.
- Some of the most detailed architecture and artwork of the ancient Maya was discovered in Copan.
- Copan first began to thrive under the rule of a warrior prince who declared himself as the King of Copan in AD 426. He was called K'inich Yax K'uk Mo', which means Blue-Green Quetzal Makaw.
- One of Copan's kings was called 18 Rabbit!



Catherwood's Drawings of Copan

Frederick Catherwood produced many detailed drawings of what he and Stephens had discovered in Copan. He used a **camera lucida** which uses mirrors and prisms to superimpose the image to be drawn around. This helps to produce drawings that are accurate in proportion and perspective.

Several years later, Catherwood used a technique called **lithography** to produce prints of his work.



Idol at Copan

This stone statue is more than three metres high and dates back to around AD 720.

It is thought to be one of Copan's most famous rulers, King Waxaklajun Ub'aah K'awiil, in the guise of a maize god.



Pyramidal Building and Fragments of Sculpture at Copan

The remains of the sculptures weren't found in exactly this location in front of the pyramid, but Catherwood did some more drawings back in London, he used the sketches he had made to draw new compositions.

Do you think this is a **reliable** source of historical information?



Activity:

On the school website, I have attached another link to lots of images of Maya artefacts from Catherwood's and Stephens' explorations.

Choose a picture that you like and answer the questions on the following slide.

Maya Picture Study

- What is in the picture?
- What details can you see when you look closely?
- Why do you think it was built?
- What do you think it is made from?
- How do you think it was made?
- What does this picture tell us about the Maya?
- Is it a primary or secondary source of information?

Challenge:

- If you could speak to Catherwood or Stephens, what would you ask them about your picture?