

### The Mayans

LC: What evidence has been discovered about the Mayans?

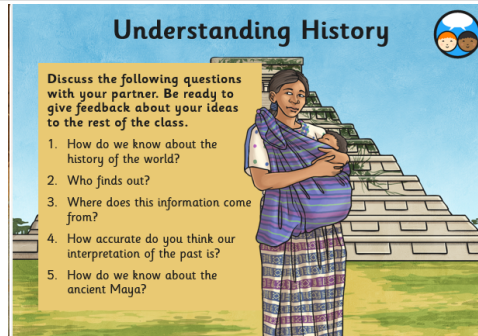
HS: Constructing knowledge of the past from a range of sources

Dec 15-20:01

### Understanding History

Discuss the following questions with your partner. Be ready to give feedback about your ideas to the rest of the class.

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 interpretation of the past is?
5. How do we know about the ancient Maya?



Dec 15-20:02

### Using Sources of Evidence

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

Sources of evidence can be primary sources or secondary sources:

**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.



How many different types of evidence can you think of that would help us to understand the Maya better? What do these sources tell us? Are they primary or secondary sources?

Complete a table with your ideas and record into your book.

Dec 15-20:03

### Primary

Artefacts

Maps

Photographs

Buildings

### Secondary

Textbooks

Internet

Television/Films/Documentaries

Stories/Tales

Etc...

Dec 15-20:05

Here are just a few suggestions you may have thought of:

**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.



1. Did you think of any other sources of evidence?
2. Do you think they are primary or secondary sources?
3. Could any be both primary and secondary sources?

**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.



Dec 15-20:08

Dec 15-20:09

### 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 Yucatan* 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!

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.

camera lucida

lithography

Dec 15-20:11

Dec 15-20:11

### Camera Lucida

Catherwood's drawings were meticulous and precise.

He used a **camera lucida**, which uses mirrors or prisms to superimpose the image being drawn onto the paper so that the proportion and perspective can be recorded accurately.

It's a little bit like a microscope, only when you look through the lens you can see the image on the paper and can draw round it.

### Historical Picture Study

Using the images and question prompts, record information about each picture.

What is it a picture of?	Why do you think this was built?	Are there any people in the picture? What are they doing?
What can you see in the picture when you look closely? List everything you can see, particularly in the detail of buildings or sculptures.	What do you think this picture can tell us about the Maya?	Is there anything you think Catherwood is trying to say in the way he has created the background, use of light, people and angles.

Dec 15-20:12

Dec 15-20:12

### Idol and Altar at Copán

The Maya would make sacrifices on an altar like this one. The upright monument or idol behind it was called a **stela**.

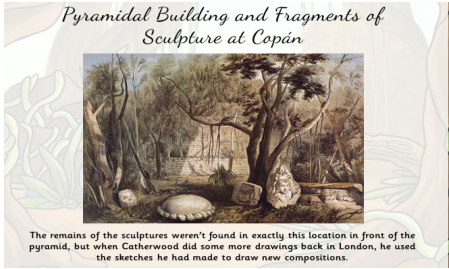
### Idol at Copán

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

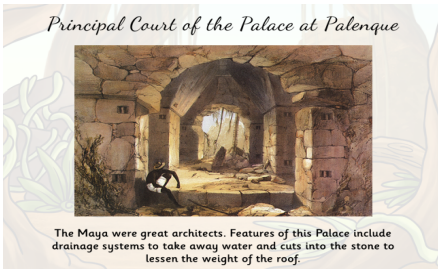
It is thought to be of one of Copán's most famous rulers, King Waxaklajun Ub'ah K'awil, in the guise of a maize god.

Dec 15-20:15

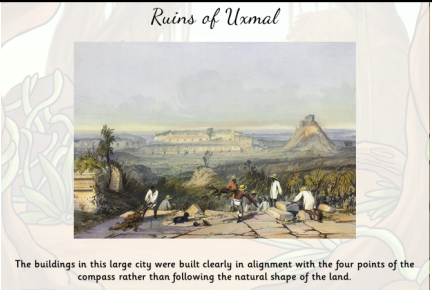
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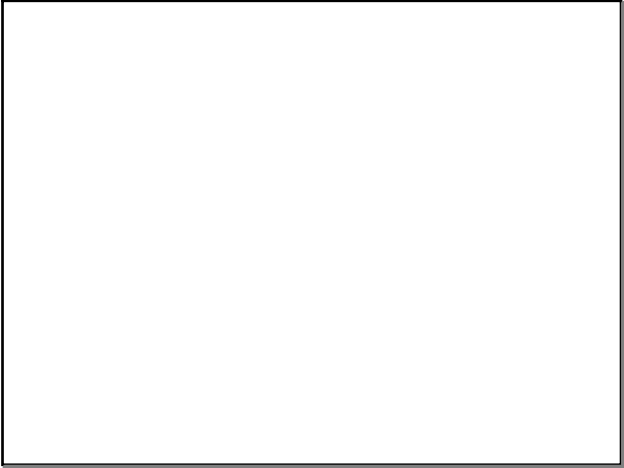
Dec 15-20:21



Dec 15-20:21



Dec 15-20:22



Dec 15-20:26