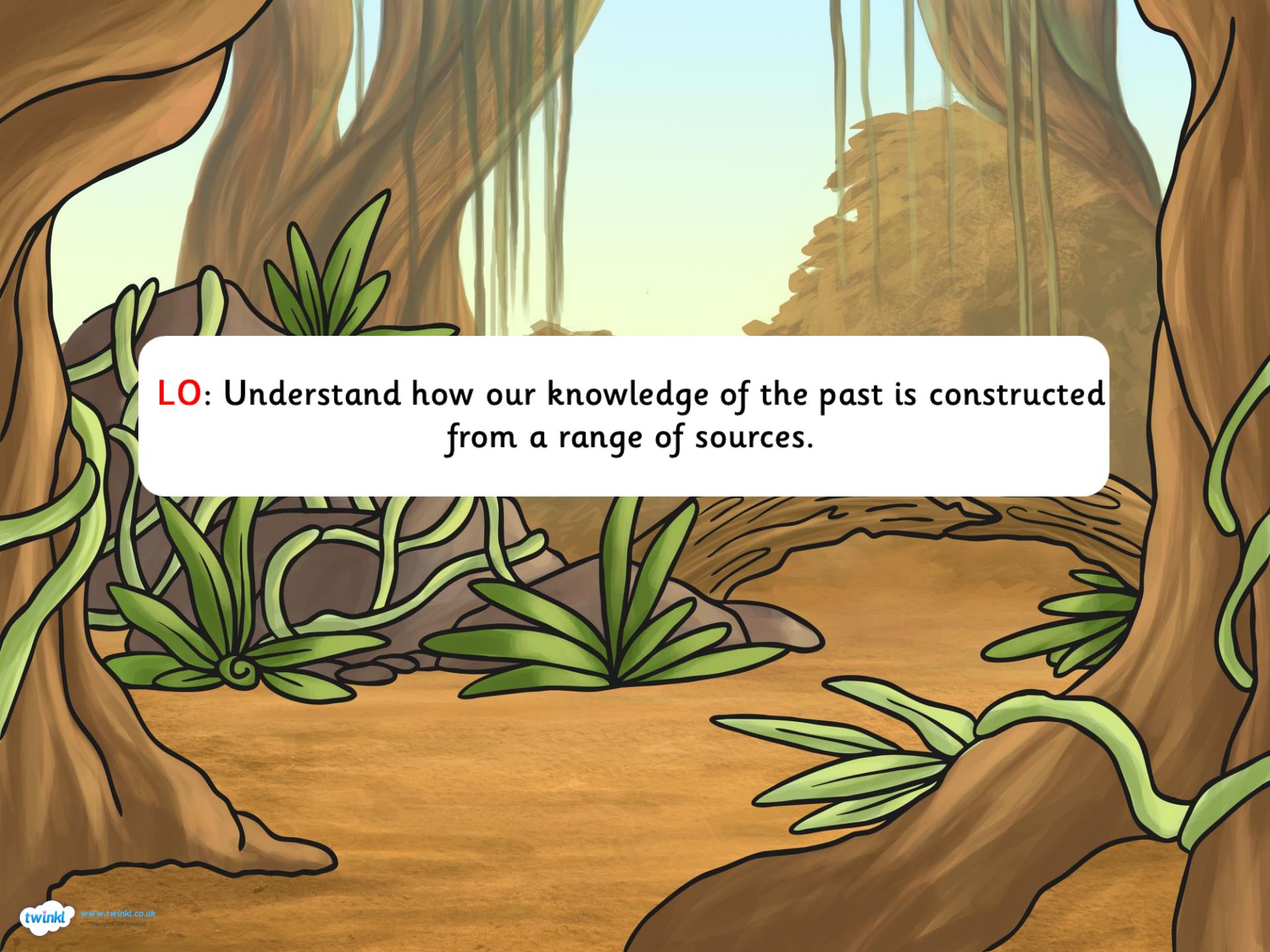


Who was Frederick Catherwood and what did he teach us about the Maya?



A task setting PowerPoint Pack on Frederick Catherwood



LO: Understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.

Who was Frederick Catherwood?

Born: 27 February 1799
Died: 27 September 1854



Frederick Catherwood was a British artist and architect. He was best known for his detailed drawings of the ruins of the Maya Civilisation.

In 1839 Frederick travelled to Central America with an American Explorer, John Lloyd Stevens. They wanted to see the ruins of Copan. Photography had only just been invented so drawings by artists were still more common than photographs to make a visual record of something. They documented the ruins and went on to discover many more, resulting in the publication of a book that became a bestseller.

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.



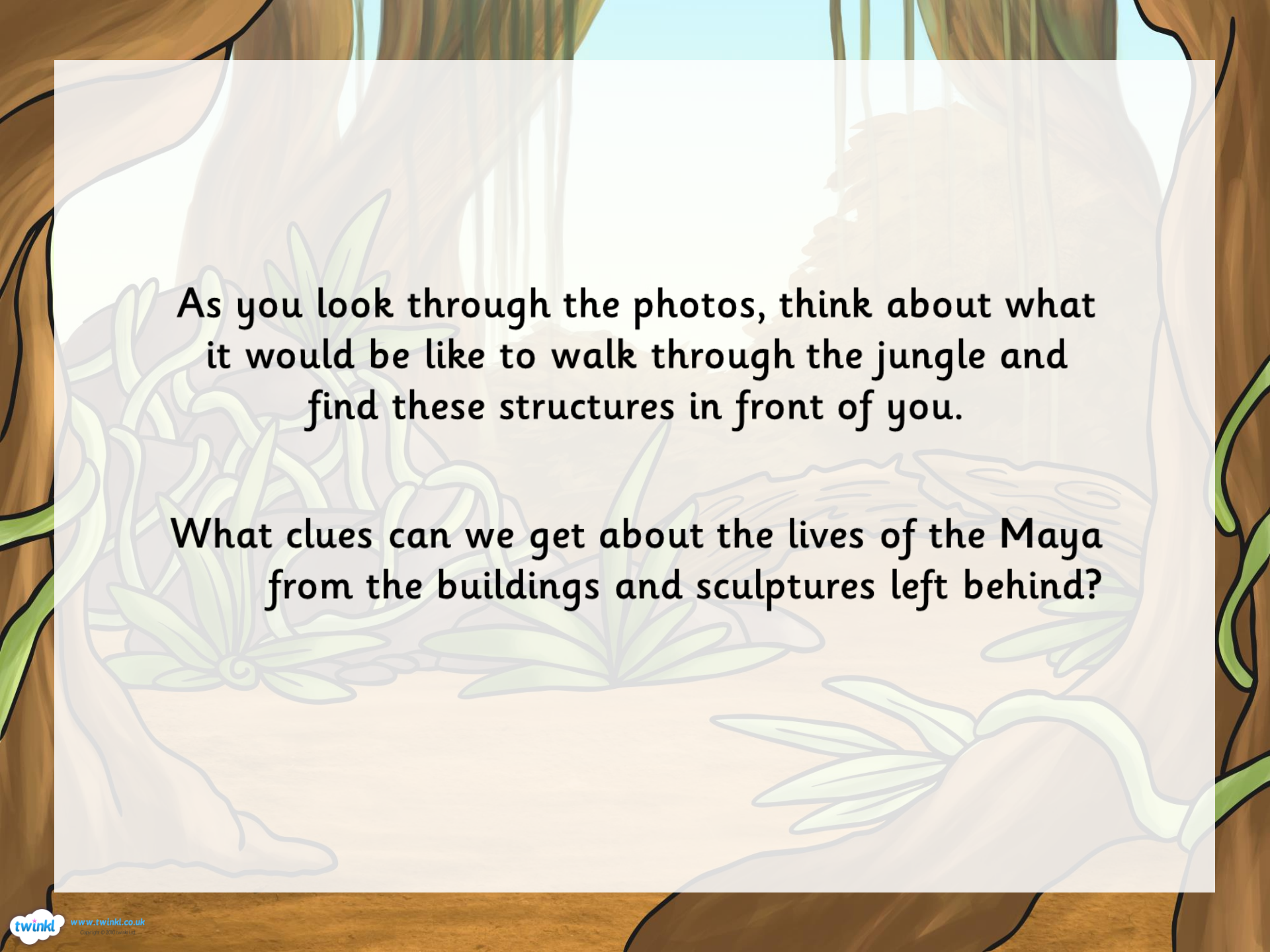
Photo courtesy of robotskirts@flickr.com - granted under creative commons licence - attribution

Lithography

Catherwood did many sketches while he was exploring the Maya ruins, and some of them appeared in the book he and Stevens published.

Six years later he used **lithography** to make a set of prints.

To create a **lithograph** the artist draws onto a block of limestone using something greasy like oil, fat or wax. The stone is then treated with an acidic mixture which etches away the parts of the stone not protected by the grease. When the stone is wet, because oil and water do not mix, oil based ink will only stick to the image drawn, so a clear print can be made onto paper. The artist then paints the colours onto the picture.

A stylized illustration of a jungle scene. In the background, there are large, brown tree trunks with green vines hanging from them. The ground is covered with various green plants, including ferns and broad-leafed plants. The overall color palette is warm, with browns, greens, and a hint of yellow. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing two paragraphs of text.

As you look through the photos, think about what it would be like to walk through the jungle and find these structures in front of you.

What clues can we get about the lives of the Maya from the buildings and sculptures left behind?

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'aah K'awiil, in the guise of a maize god.



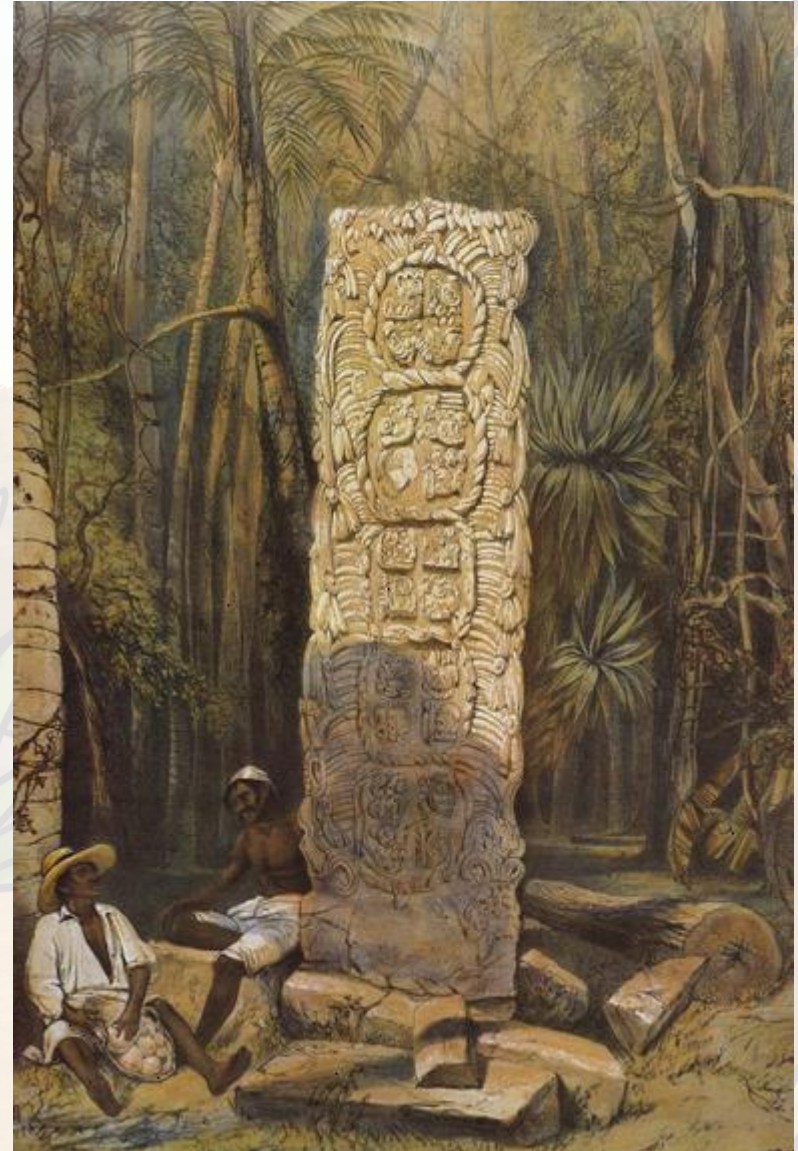
Pyramidal Building and Fragments of Sculpture at Copán



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

Back of an Idol at Copán

This statue has quetzal feathers as a border and hieroglyphs telling the history of the king or deity it was built to honour. Catherwood uses shadow to create a sense of mystery, but his depiction of the detail on the statue is accurate.

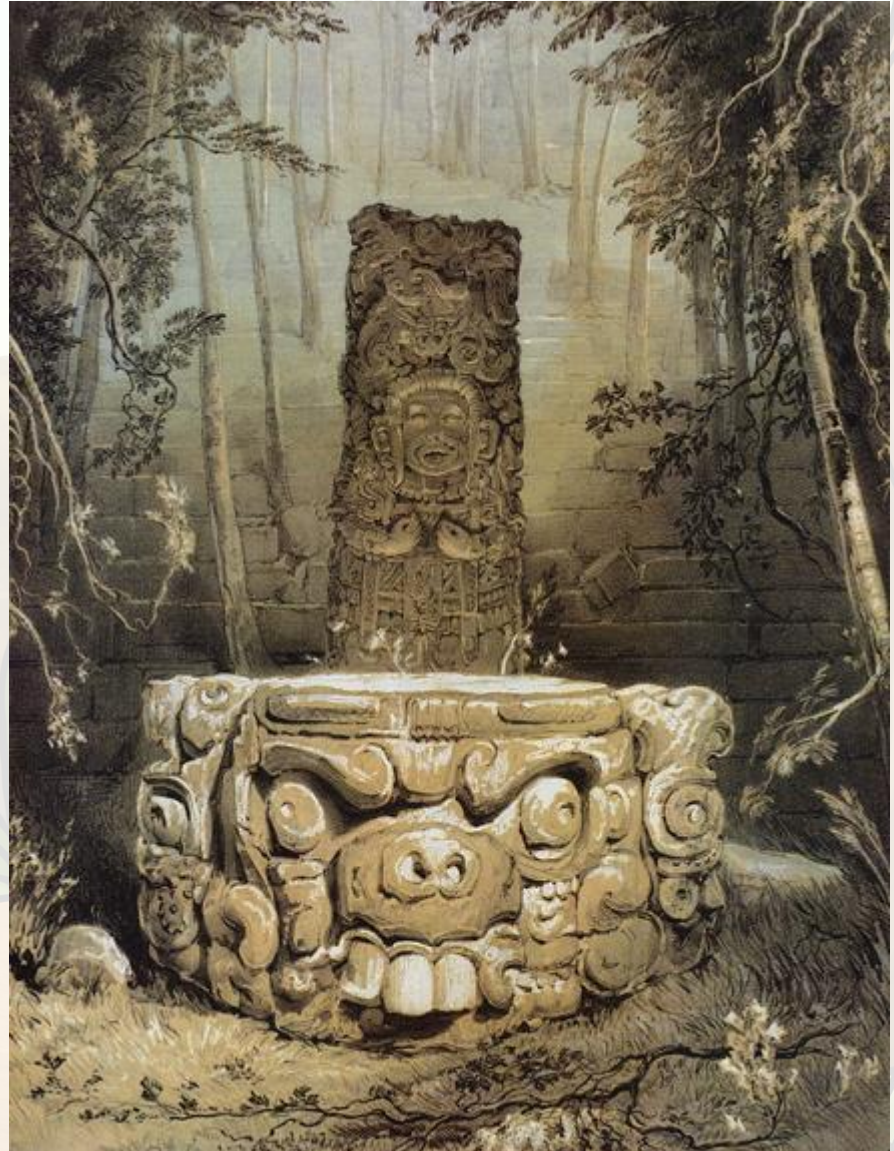


Broken Idol at Copán



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 **stelae**.



General View of Palenque

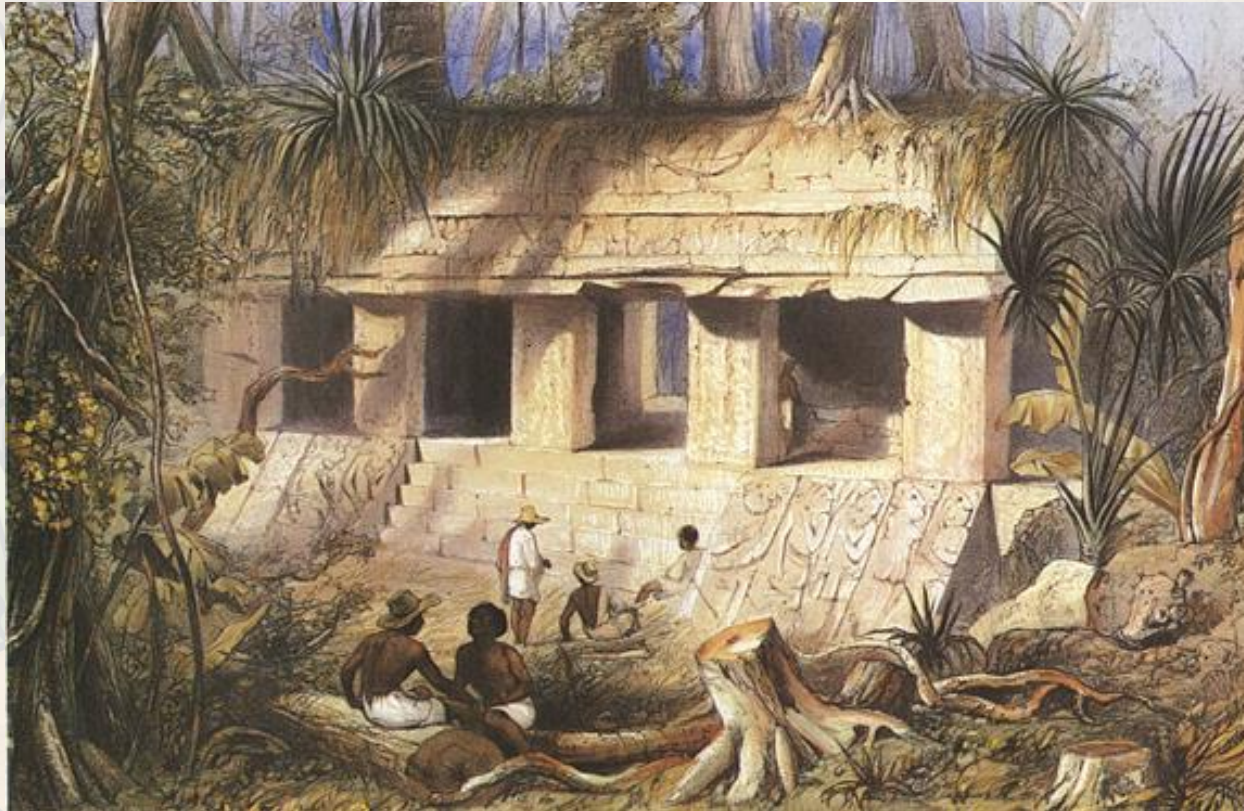


Principal Court of the Palace at Palenque



The Maya were great architects. Features of this Palace include drainage systems to take away water and cuts into the stone to lessen the weight of the roof.

Interior of Casa III at Palenque



Chichén Itzá



The most visited of all Maya archaeological sites.

Kabah

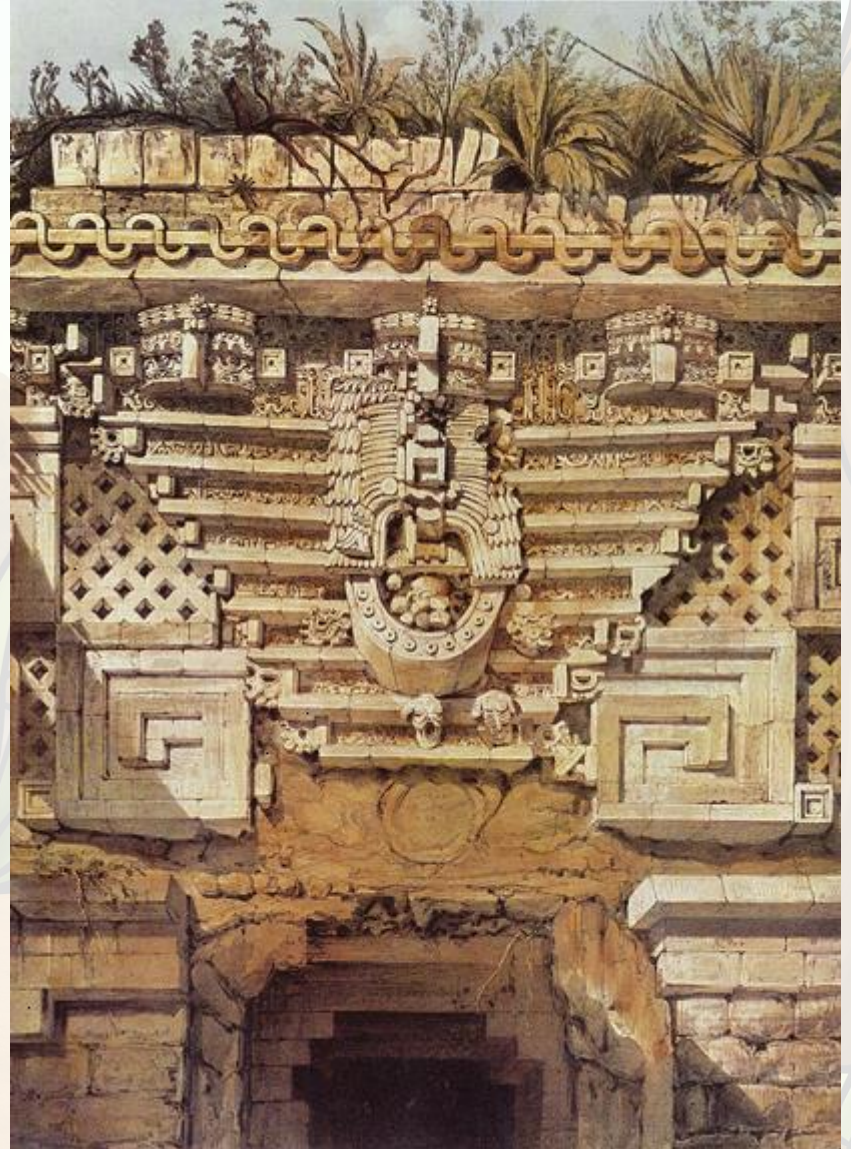


Ruins of Uxmal



The buildings in this large city were built clearly in alignment with the four points of the compass rather than following the natural shape of the land.

*Entrance of a
building in Uxmal*



Archway, Casa del Gobernador, Uxmal

Façade, from the French word meaning 'face', refers to the exterior side of a building, usually but not always the front.

Remember, the Maya had no metal tools when they carved these intricate designs.

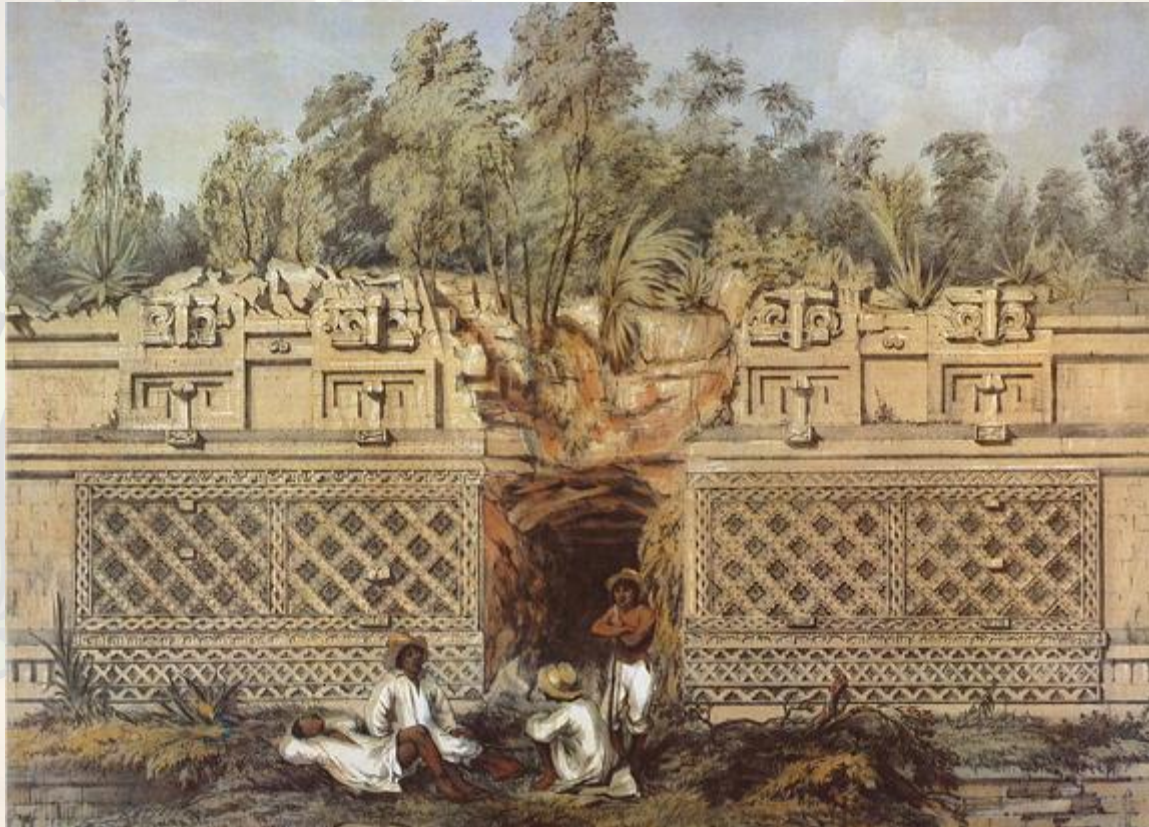
The upper part of this façade was a mosaic, containing thousands of handmade pieces of stone. Can you spot the snake in the building as well as in the foreground?



Gateway of the Great Teocallis, Uxmal

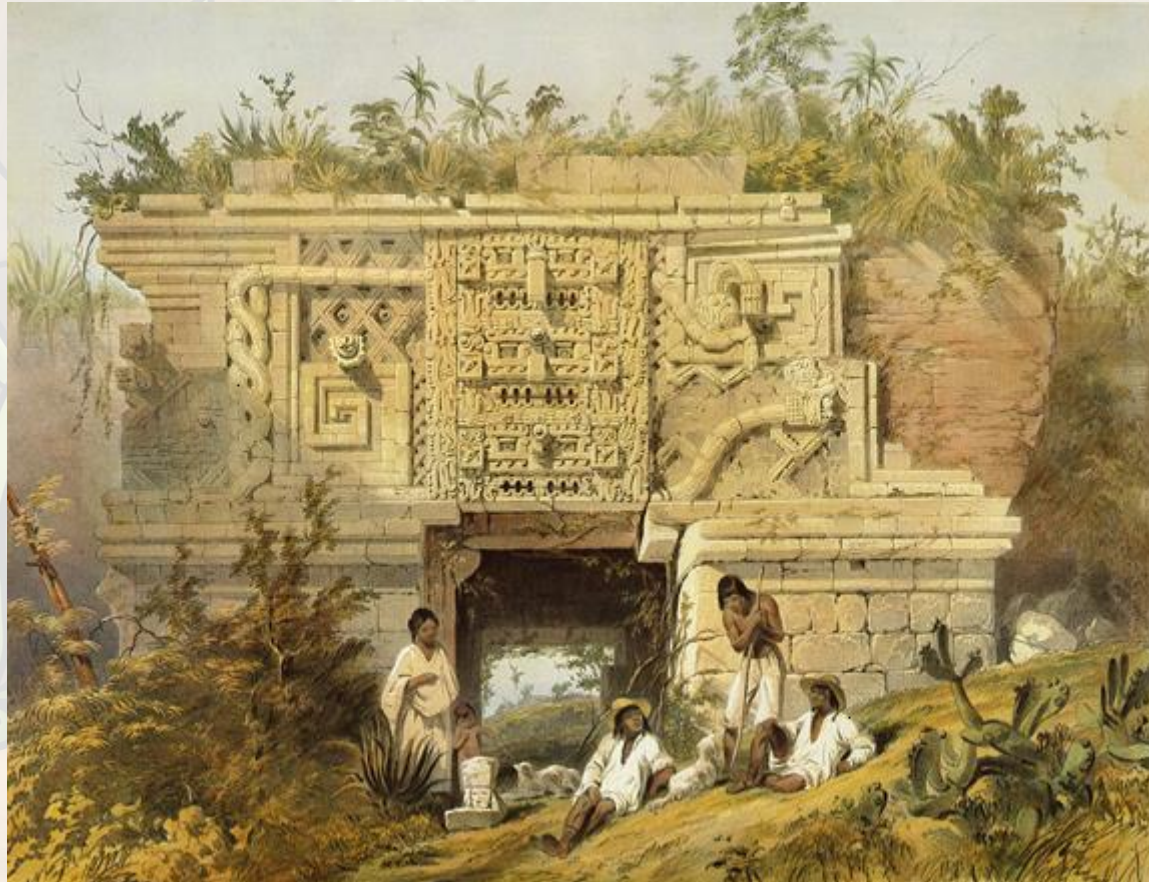


Ornament Over the Gateway of the Great Teacallis, Uxmal



The middle section of the upper wall has caved away into the entrance.

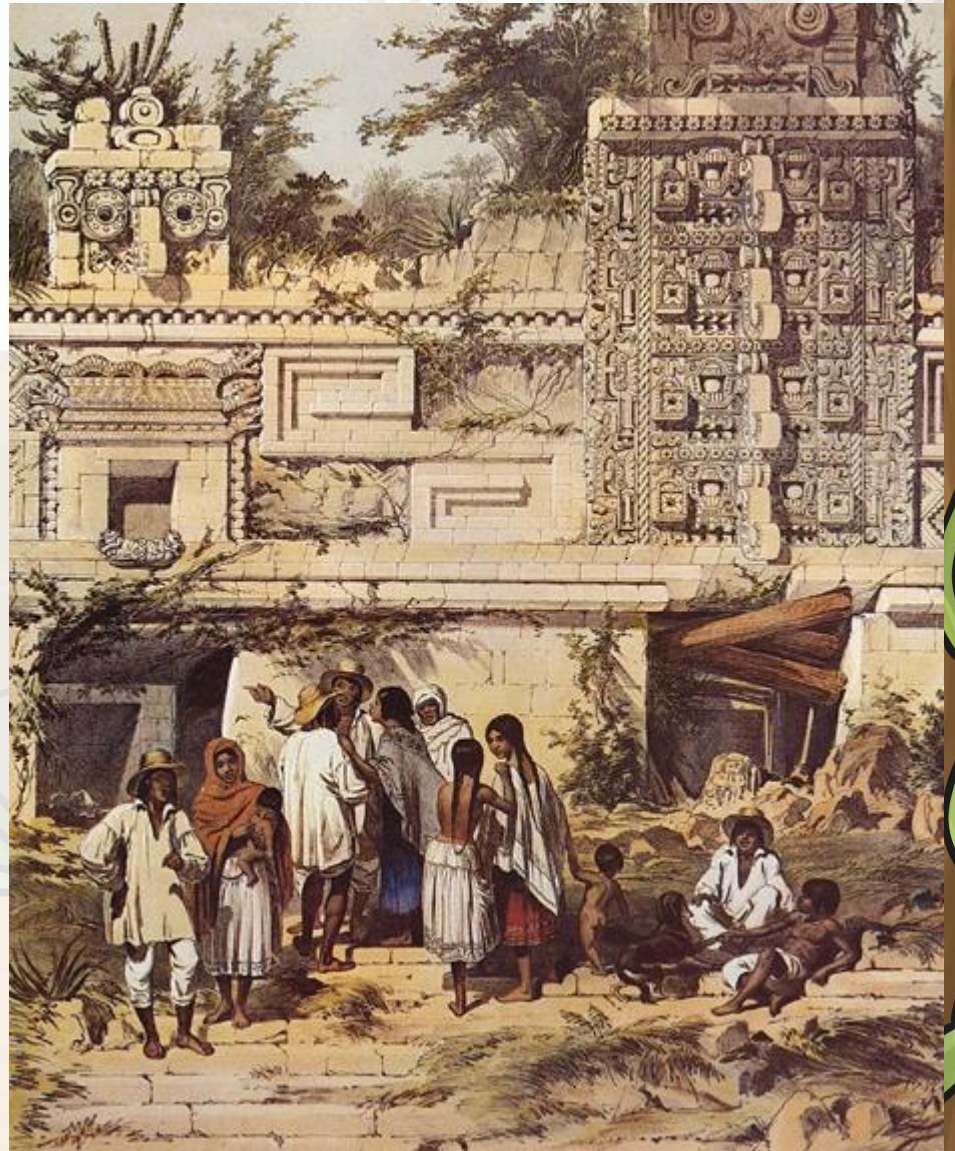
Archway in Uxmal



Can you spot the serpent with a human head in its jaws?

Portion of La Casa de Las Manjas, Uxmal

The masks represent the ancient
rain god, Chac.



Las Manjas, Chichén-Itzá

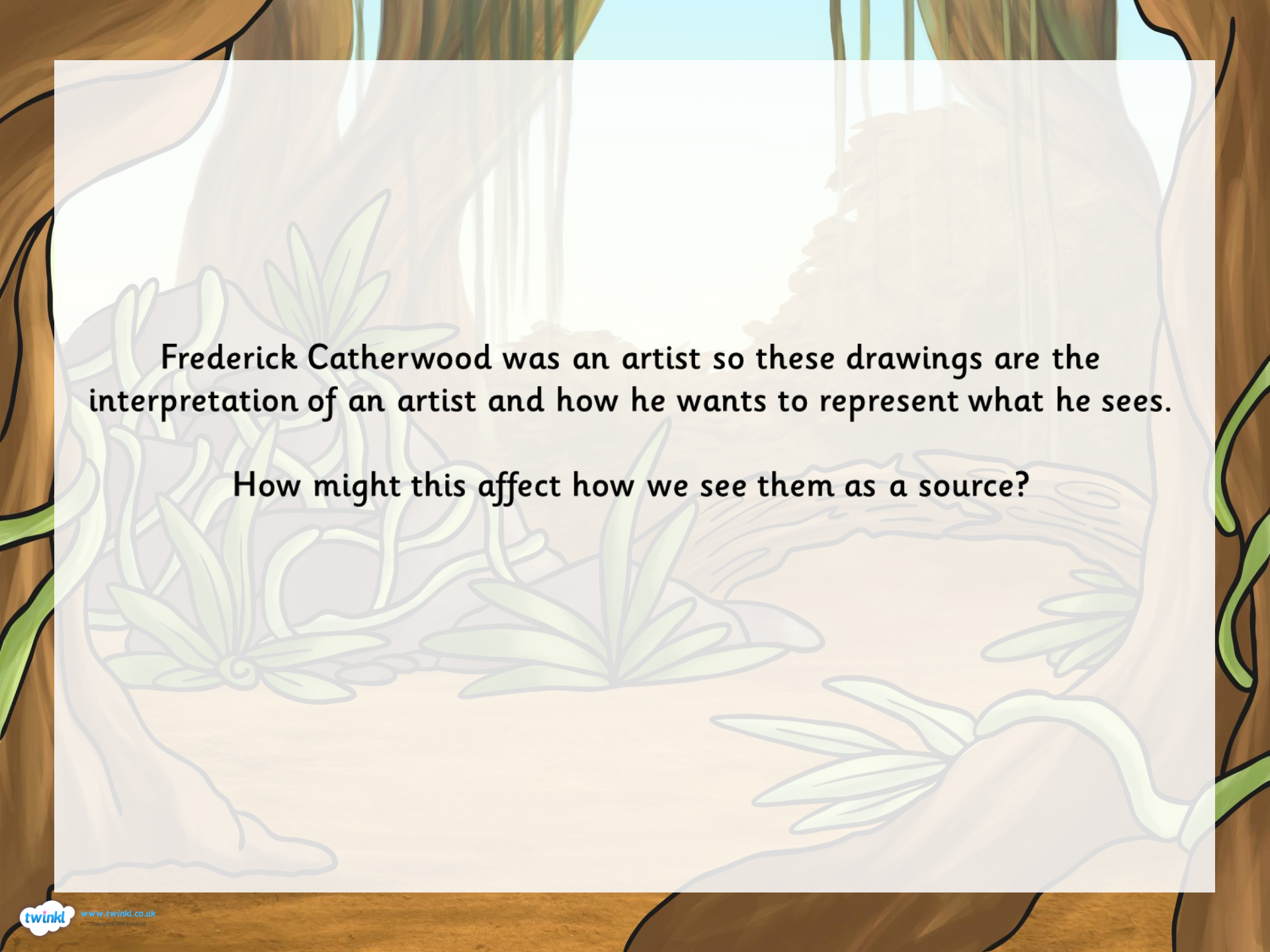


Look at how parts of the building stick out to make the pattern even more impressive.

Temple at Tuloam (today called Tulum)

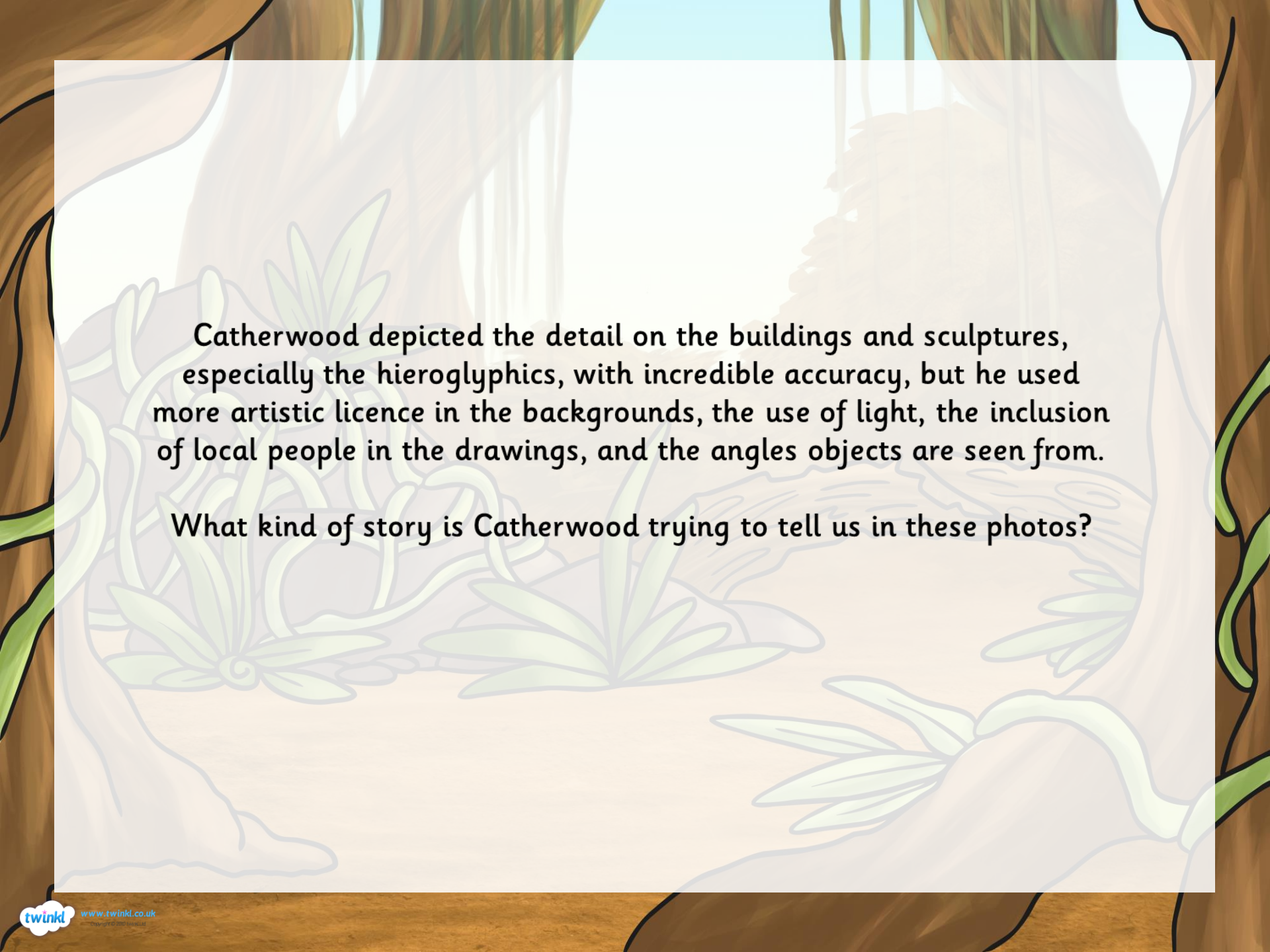


The steps look like they lead up to the sky.



Frederick Catherwood was an artist so these drawings are the interpretation of an artist and how he wants to represent what he sees.

How might this affect how we see them as a source?



Catherwood depicted the detail on the buildings and sculptures, especially the hieroglyphics, with incredible accuracy, but he used more artistic licence in the backgrounds, the use of light, the inclusion of local people in the drawings, and the angles objects are seen from.

What kind of story is Catherwood trying to tell us in these photos?

Group Activity

Look at the picture in front of you with your group.

What is it a picture of?

What can you see in the picture when you look closely? List everything you can see, particularly in the detail of buildings or sculptures.

Are there any people in the picture? What are they doing?

Why do you think this was built?

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 picture? Consider the background, use of light, people and angles.



THE END