

The Maya World



Lesson Plans for Teaching about the Ancient Maya
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Who are the Maya?

- The Maya are Native people who live in Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras today and for at least the past 3,000 years.

The Maya are divided into highland or lowland groups. The highland Maya live in mountainous areas of these countries; the lowland Maya live in tropical forests.



- The Maya live in the modern countries of
 - Mexico (Yucatan/Chiapas)
 - Belize
 - Guatemala
 - Honduras



The Maya Timeline

- 1200 B.C. – 300 B.C. Middle Preclassic
- 300 B.C. – 300 A.D. Late Preclassic
- A.D. 300- 900 Classic
- A.D. 900-1492 Post-Classic

What is the Maya Environment Like?

- Tropical Rain Forest in Southern Maya Lowlands
- Has as many as 40 species of trees per hectare (2.5 acres)
- Crowns of trees closely spaced, little light reaches ground ($< 1\%$)
- Trees are 130-200 feet tall



Tree covered with strangler fig

What do these trees tell us about the Maya environment:



A



B



C

How do we know about the Maya?

- Through records the Maya left us about themselves:
 - Murals/Facades on Buildings
 - Stelae
 - Paintings on Ceramics
 - Codices (Books)
 - Hieroglyphic Writing

Murals/Facades on Buildings



Mural at Bonampak



Façade on Structure at Cerros, Belize

Stelae

- Stelae are carved stone monuments
- Called *Tree Stones* by the Maya
- Often record events in the lives of Maya kings or other important people



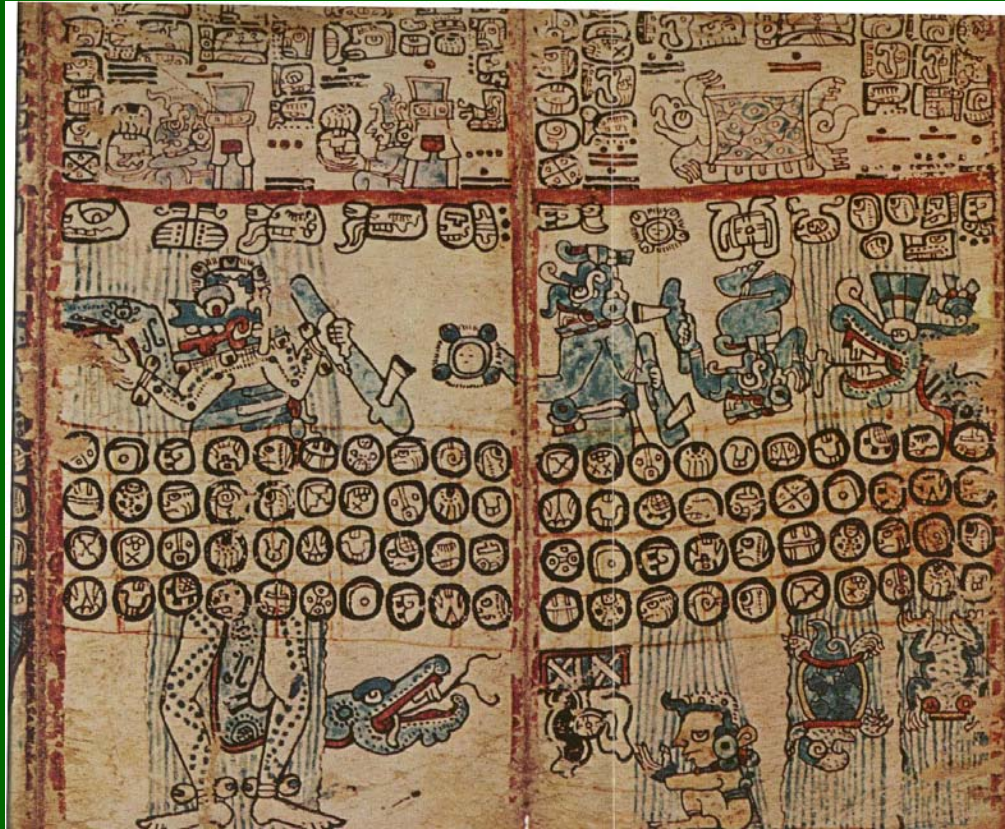
Stela of Maya King from Tikal

Paintings on Ceramics



Scene from the Popol Vuh

Codices



Maya folding books made by covering bark paper with a thin layer of limestone and then painting text

Hieroglyphic Writing

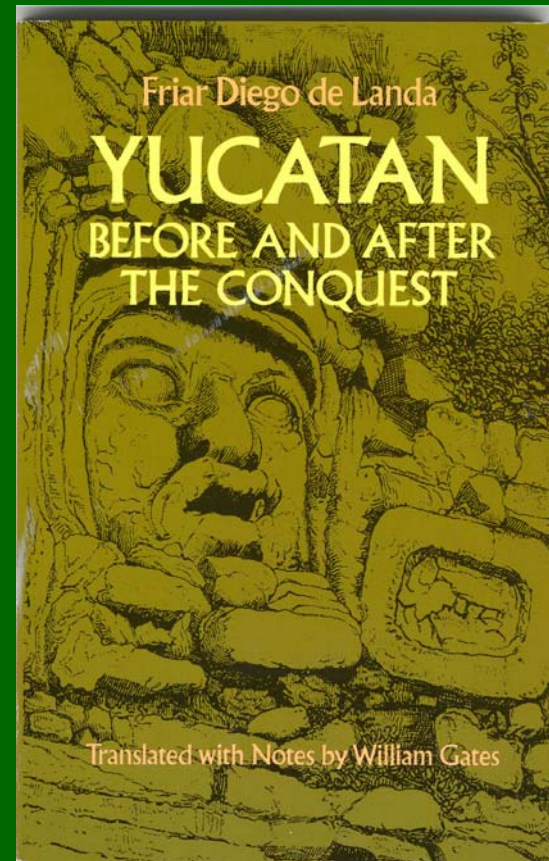


Hieroglyphic Staircase from Ras Balam

How do we know about the Maya?

- From Accounts by Others:

The most famous is an account by Friar Diego de Landa, first published in 1566 as *Relacion de las cosas de Yucatan* or *Yucatan before and After the Conquest*.



(Landa is best known as the Bishop of Merida who burned 27 Maya hieroglyphic books.)

How do we know about the Maya?



- From what the Maya tell us today

How do we know about the Maya?

- From investigations by archaeologists:
 - Archaeologists study human activity by studying the evidence left behind
 - Archaeologists use the scientific method to interpret this evidence
 - Context and classification are two of the tools archaeologists use
 - Archaeologists sometimes “dig”



Excavation of Structure 5C at Cerros

Lesson 1: Our Differences and Similarities with the Maya

- The Classic Period Maya lived 1,000 years ago. How can there be any similarities between their lives and ours?

Shouldn't there only be differences?



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List the differences and similarities between each pair of buildings:



A

List the differences and similarities
between each pair of buildings



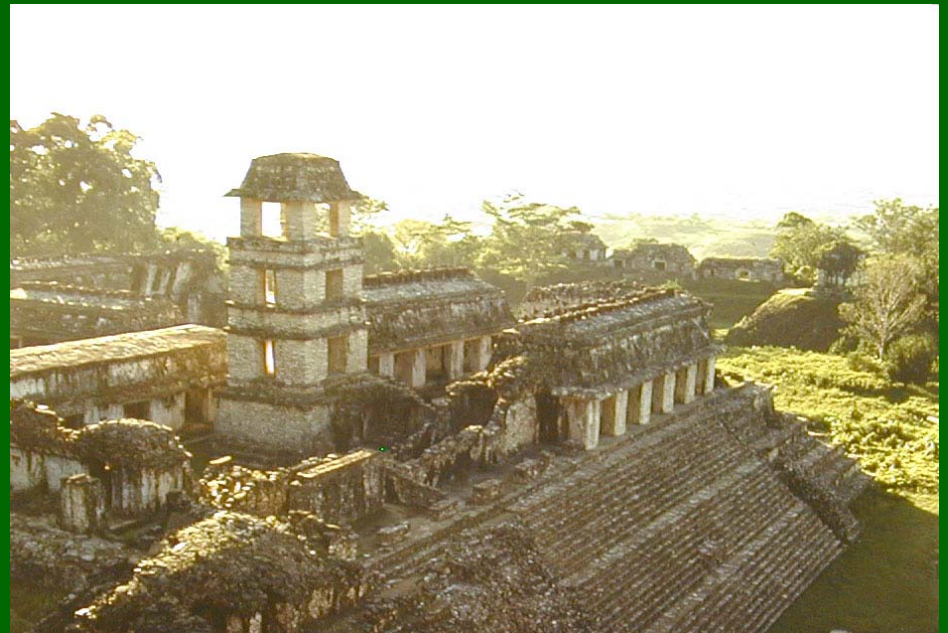
B

List the differences and similarities
between each pair of buildings



C

List the differences and similarities
between each pair of buildings



D

List the differences and similarities between each pair of buildings:



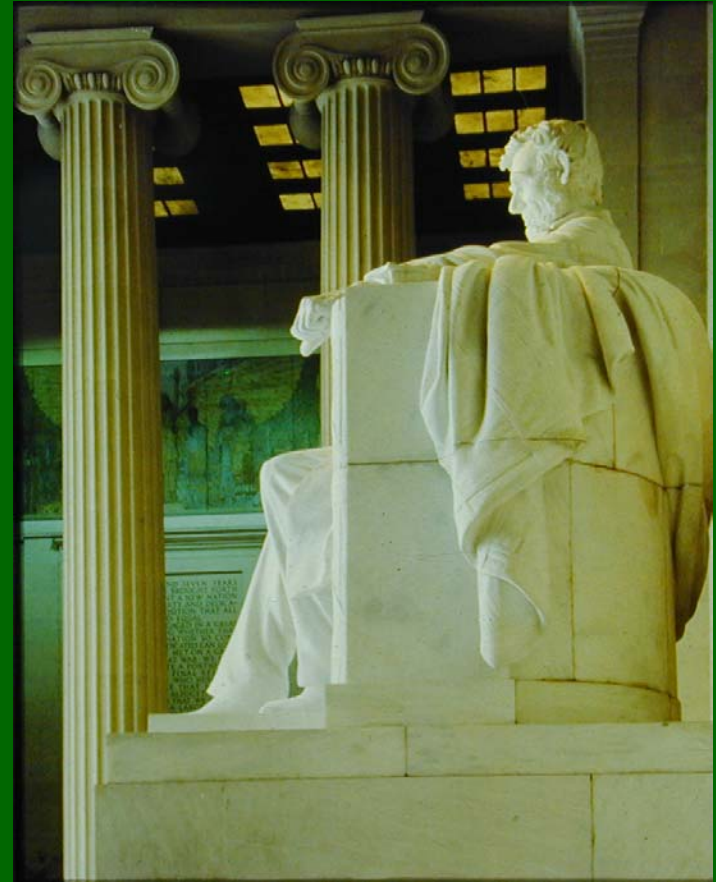
E

List the differences and similarities between each pair of buildings:



F

What about this pair?



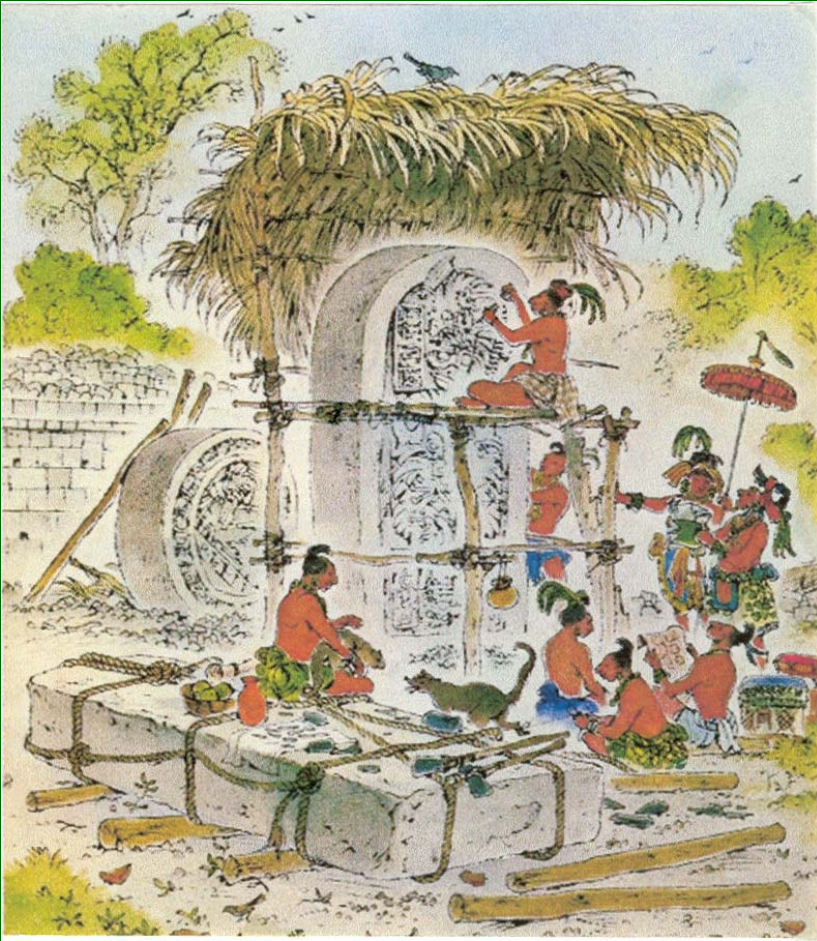
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Or this one?



H

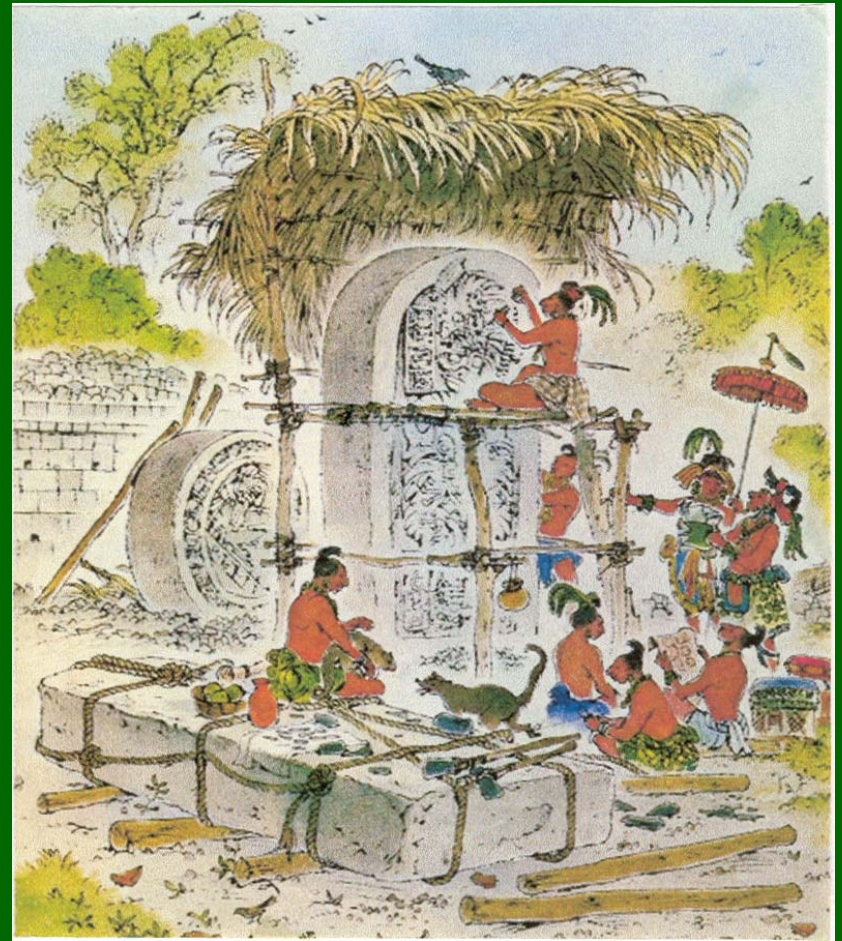
Context



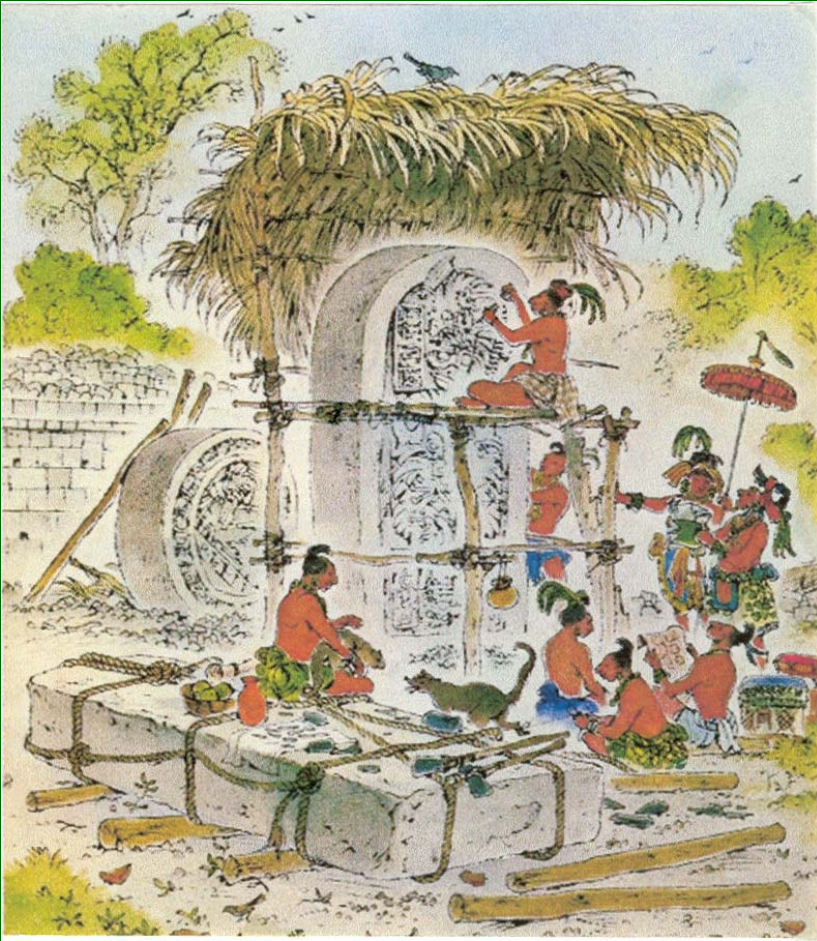
- Context includes the spatial relationship that artifacts have with each other and with the location in which they are found.
- What things in this picture would you choose to tell the story?

Preservation

- Our interpretation of archaeological sites is affected by the preservation of different materials.
- What things in this picture would be preserved the longest...which the shortest?



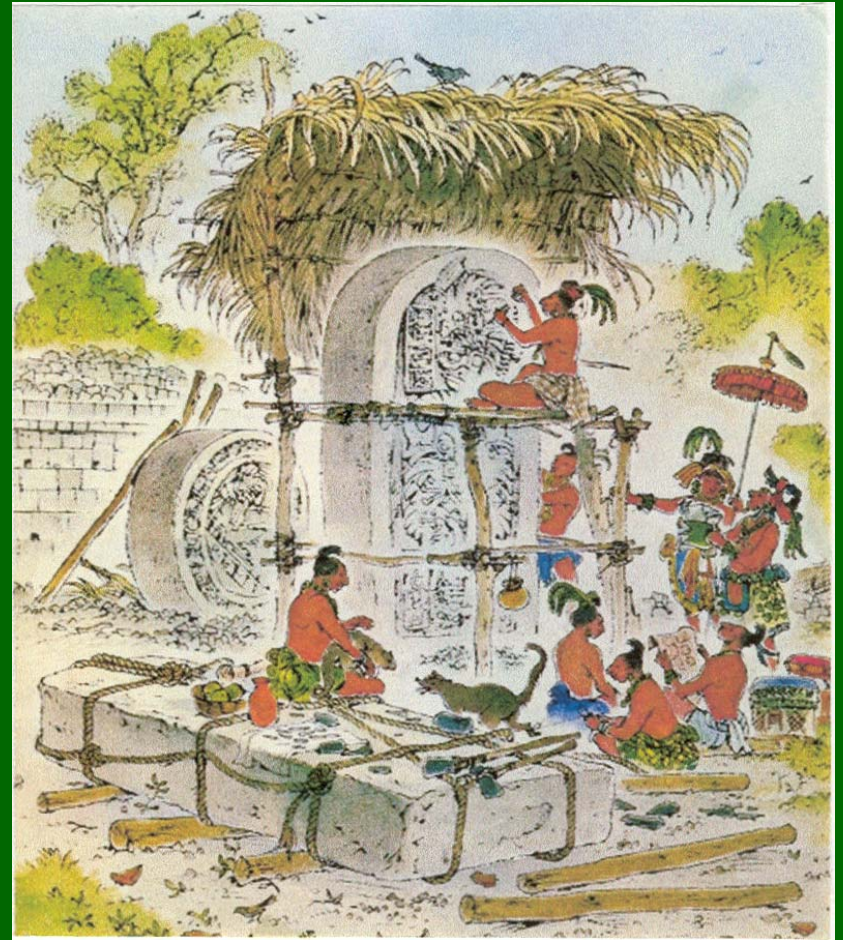
Lesson 2: Context (1)



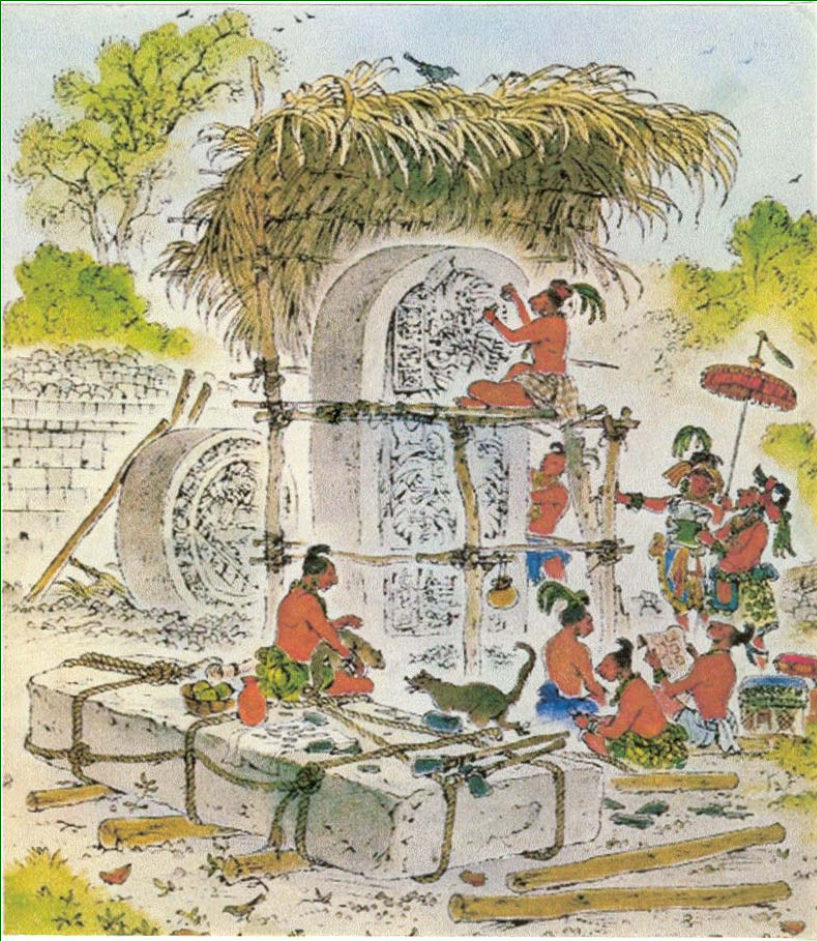
- Read one of the story handouts or look at one of the pictures.
- With your group, choose five things which would identify that scene. Write each item on one of the cards.

Lesson 2: Context (2)

- Read one of the story handouts or look at one of the pictures.
- With your group, choose five things which would identify that scene. Write each item on one of the cards.



Lesson 2: Context (3)



- Look at one of the bags of artifacts.
- Which of the pictures do the artifacts match?

Even with the many differences
between our culture and the
Maya, there are many similarities
that we can identify.

