



Wild Adventures: Percy Fawcett and the Lost City of Z



The Story of Percy Fawcett

Percy Fawcett (born 1865) was an explorer from Torquay who disappeared (along with his son Jack and his son's best friend Raleigh Rimell) in 1925 during an expedition to discover the Lost City of Z, in the jungles of Brazil, South America.

Percy had heard from local tribes about the legend of an ancient city called Kuhikugu and found an old manuscript by a Portuguese explorer written in 1753. It described the ruins of a lost city that contained arches, a statue, and a temple with hieroglyphics, but no clues as to its exact location. After lots of research, Percy was determined to find what he called 'The Lost City of Z' but left strict instructions stating that if the expedition did not return, then no rescue expedition should be sent in case the rescuers suffered the same fate.

Percy would have to be strong and brave if he were to complete this mission. He was venturing into unknown territory in the Amazon Rainforest, facing all kinds of unknown dangers; trekking hundreds of miles through difficult terrain (steep mountains; humid rainforest; wide, deep fast-flowing rivers; canyons); potentially hostile natives; and dangerous animals. Percy was an experienced traveller; he had explored much of Brazil and Bolivia, studied cartography (mapmaking) and was interested in wildlife and archaeology.

The fearless threesome began their expedition from Cuiabá, Brazil on 20th April 1925. All we know since then is that Percy, Jack and Raleigh disappeared around May 1925, somewhere in in the Mato Grosso area of the Amazon rainforests, Brazil. They were never seen or heard of again, and no evidence has been found as to what happened to them.

Some explorers have said that three was too few a number to have survived for very long in the jungle. Some say he could have had an accident, been bitten, gobbled by piranhas or died of illness, exhaustion or starvation. Others claim more sinister ends – he could have been killed by local tribes, or maybe other explorers wanting to claim the glory of being the first to find the City of Z! There is also a theory that perhaps Percy wanted to 'disappear' and didn't ever plan to return to England but make a new life in Brazil instead. Or was it, as one tale told, he'd lost his memory and lived out the rest of his life as a chief among a tribe of cannibals?

Maybe you have other ideas...?

Percy's Project Ideas

- What would Percy have needed to take for his adventure to Brazil? Pack a Rainforest Explorer Kit and think carefully about the sort of things you might need to head into a hot, humid rainforest; clothes, equipment, maps, food supplies, etc. Remember to only pack the essentials – you would have to carry everything yourself!
- Make Percy's passport, complete with stamps, visas, etc. He travelled for over 19 years before his last doomed expedition; visiting Hong Kong, Malta, Sri Lanka, Bolivia, North Africa, Ireland as well as all over Brazil.
- Write a diary as if you were Percy. Include how you might be feeling both before the trip and during the adventure.
- All good explorers keep a field notebook of interesting things they see on their adventures – can you make one for Percy? What animals and plants might he have seen in the Amazon rainforest? Make sketches and write short notes about what he might've found.
- Whilst on a previous expedition to the rainforest in 1907, Fawcett claimed to have seen a 62 foot (19 m) long, 12 inch (30.5 cm) diameter giant anaconda (which nobody believed!) See if you can make a 19m long snake to match Percy's out of scarves /socks/ tights/trousers/ anything else you can find.... It's pretty huge!
- He was also reported to have found two mysterious creatures unknown to science – a small cat-like animal, and a dog with 2 noses. Draw a picture to go in your field notebook of what you think it might have looked like (be as imaginative as you like!) Write field notes to describe your findings in detail: where were they found? How big were they? What were their distinguishing features? Were they shy/friendly/aggressive? What was their fur like? What do they eat? Did you find any tracks/fur/poo?
- Draw a map of the forest and how to reach the Lost City of Z. You might want to include some of the features and potential dangers Percy might have come across in the rainforest, for example; swamps, pits, tribal villages, incredible plants, rivers, piranhas, snakes, jaguar territory, waterfalls, etc.
- Write your own guide to exploring the Amazon rainforest, complete with amazing wildlife to look out for and dangers to beware of.



- Find 10 incredible facts about the Amazon rainforest and make them into a poster.
- Make a spotter's guide of pictures of rare creatures to look out for in the rainforest.
- Percy said he saw an Apazauca spider - a giant black tarantula the size of a dinner plate that left its victims blackened from the poison. Spiders like these are incredible but often misunderstood creatures – make a fact file about awesome but supposedly scary creatures that will show the world just how brilliant they really are! You could include spiders, snakes, sharks, bats, wolves, wasps, rats...
- We will never know if Percy ever found The Lost City of Z. Draw or make (from LEGO®, blocks, recycled boxes, etc) your own version of what you think the Lost City might have looked like (check out Machu Picchu or Kuhikugu for ideas). Why do you think the City became lost? What happened to the people? What other lost cities or legendary kingdoms have you heard of?
- The last anyone heard from Percy was a letter he wrote to his wife on 29th May 1925 from Dead Horse Camp, in the jungles of Mato Grosso, Brazil. It said that he was ready to go into unexplored territory with only Jack and Raleigh. They were about to cross the Upper Xingu, a river that joins the River Amazon and they were feeling 'optimistic'. He finished the letter with "You need have no fear of any failure". Can you write your own version of this last letter from Percy to his wife?
- Percy disappeared sometime in May 1925. What do you think might have happened to him? Many expeditions have been led to try and find him, but several never returned. Write Percy's last few diary entries leading up to his disappearance in the jungle or write a story about what you think really happened.
- Imagine you are a newspaper reporter following Percy Fawcett's story – write a front page headline story about his disappearance in the rainforest, complete with 'interviews' with people who knew him, colleagues from previous expeditions, tribal people he may have met along the way, etc.

