



## Photography

Photographs are one of the only ways to accurately record the world around us. One of the reasons it is so hard to know exactly what ancient life was like is because there are only drawings and paintings as a record. The very first photograph was taken in 1826 by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. It took over eight hours to develop and produced a single picture. There was no way to copy the image or make more copies.

The first man to create a photograph that could be reproduced was William Henry Fox Talbot. He produced his first photo, which he called a “photogenic drawing” in 1834. Once again, the image couldn’t be recreated. In 1835, Talbot created a negative image. This was a reverse image which meant that light areas were captured as being dark and visa versa. He soon realised that this negative could be used to create lots of copies of the image.

Unfortunately, Talbot realised that a French painter called Louis Daguerre was also working on a photographic process and was making great progress. Talbot put his negatives to one side and continued to work on a new photographic system himself.

Over the following years, Talbot developed a system called the calotype system. These new negatives were very clear and meant that photographs could be reproduced easily and quickly. They remained the most common type of photograph until digital cameras became popular in the 1990s.

Photographs were an amazing invention, but without cameras to take them, they would never have existed. The first design for a camera was called a pinhole camera. It used a tiny hole to focus an image on the other side of the box. It was also known as the camera obscura. The first pinhole camera was created roughly a thousand years ago by Ibn al-Haytham. From the 1500s, this type of camera was used to help people to draw.

The idea of creating a permanent photograph relied on the fact that some chemicals darken when they are exposed to light. This had been known for centuries, but nobody had worked out a way to

use this to create images. The first person to use this fact to create an image was Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. He used a chemical called bitumen which hardened in light. He worked with Daguerre to develop his idea. When Niépce died in 1833, Daguerre went on to change the chemical he used to silver iodide. This developed much more quickly and produced clear pictures.

Photographic film was really pioneered by George Eastman. He created a cheap and easy to use paper in 1885. He produced his first camera, called the “Kodak” in 1888. He made the camera affordable and available to most people. It came pre-loaded with 100 “exposures” and had to be sent back to be developed. This is much like today’s disposable cameras. For the first time in history, human beings were able to accurately record their lives on a large scale.

## RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Who took the first photograph?
2. Who was also working on a design for a new type of photograph at the same time as Talbot?
3. What was Talbot’s improved type of photograph called?
4. Which inventor used bitumen to develop their photograph?
5. How many photographs could somebody take with a “Kodak” camera?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

- S** What was the difference between the very first photograph and the one Talbot took?
- V** Find and copy a word that means “copied many times”.
- I** Why don’t you think Joseph Nicéphore Niépce’s first type of photograph become popular?
- V** Find a phrase that tells you the author thinks photographs were important.
- S** What did George Eastman do that made his Kodak cameras popular?

Answers:

1. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce
2. Daguerre
3. Calotype
4. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce
5. 100

S: Talbot's could be copied many times

V: Reproduced

I: It took a long time to develop and wasn't very clear

V: Photographs were an amazing invention

S: They were affordable and available to most people