

Archaeology Facts



Archaeology is the study of the past through the things that people made, used, and left behind. The purpose of archaeology is to understand how people from the past lived and what they were like.

INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Archaeology enables us to understand not only where and when people lived on the earth, but also how and why they lived.
- ❖ Archaeology is a subfield of anthropology, which is the study of human cultures. The other subfields are cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, and linguistics.
- ❖ Archaeological investigations are a major source of knowledge of prehistoric, ancient, and extinct cultures.
- ❖ People who study archaeology are called archaeologists.
- ❖ Archaeologists use remains, such as old coins, tools, buildings, and garbage, to understand how people lived.



Archaeology Facts

- ❖ These remains are called artifacts.
- ❖ Much of what we see around us, such as computers, clothing, food, books, and buildings, are artifacts. Natural objects, like a stick of wood or a piece of bone, are considered artifacts if humans have used them for some purpose.
- ❖ From these artifacts, archaeologists build a model of what culture was like.
- ❖ Archaeology comes from the Greek words “*archaia*”, meaning “ancient things”, and “*logos*”, meaning “theory” or “science”.



Pachacamac, Peru

Archaeologists mapping their finds at Pachacamac, Peru, an indigenous town occupied from approximately 200 BC to 1532 AD, when it was sacked by conquistadors under the command of Francisco Pizarro.

Martin Mejia/AP Images

HISTORY

- ❖ There is no doubt that there have always been people who were interested in the material remains of the past. However, as a discipline, archaeology has its earliest roots in 15th and 16th-century Europe, back in the time when the Renaissance Humanists looked back upon the glories of Greece and Rome.
- ❖ In the 16th century, popes, cardinals, and noblemen in Italy began to collect antiquities and to sponsor excavations to find more works of ancient art.
- ❖ These collectors were followed by others in northern Europe who were similarly interested in antique culture.
- ❖ However, all this activity was still not archaeology in the strict sense. It was more likely what we would call art collecting today.



Archaeology Facts

MAIN TYPES OF ARCHAEOLOGY

- ❖ There are several different kinds of archaeology, but there are two main types - prehistoric and historic archaeology.
- ❖ **Prehistoric archaeology** refers to the study of human prehistory, or the period of human history before written records existed. This includes most of our human past. The family of humans can be traced back at least five million years. The earliest modern humans appeared around fifty thousand years ago. Humans did not start writing things down until 5,200 years ago. That gives many thousands of years of human experience that was not recorded.
- ❖ **Historical archaeology** refers to the studies of that portion of the human past that has written records. While it uses many of the techniques used in prehistoric archaeology, written records give historic archaeology an advantage in its research.

METHODS

An archaeological investigation normally involves several distinct phases, each of which employs its own variety of methods.

- ❖ **Remote sensing.** Before truly starting to dig in a location, remote sensing might be used to look at what sites are located within a large area or to provide more information about sites or regions. There are two types of remote sensing instruments being used - the *passive instruments*, which sense only radiation emitted by the object being viewed or reflected by the object from a source other than the instrument, and the *active instruments*, which emit energy and records what is reflected.



Remote Sensing Technology for Archeological Studies.
Image Credit: Financial Tribune



Archaeology Facts



Monte Alban archaeological site

- ❖ **Field survey.** The common basic place archaeologists study is called the site. It is any location where there is evidence of human activity. From remote sensing, the archaeological project then continues (or alternatively, begins) with a field survey.

- ❖ This is when archaeologists (often landscape archaeologists) search for archaeological sites and collect information about the location, distribution, and organization of past human cultures across a large area.

- ❖ **Excavation** is the controlled exploration of what lies below the surface. It is usually carried out systematically in gridded trenches with shovels and trowels. Excavation is often slow and wearisome work that involves digging down a centimeter at a time, can also be backbreaking, difficult toil, shoveling through meters of densely packed soil. However, the purpose is the same in either case, which is to reveal the types of human activities that took place at a site over time.



Archaeological excavation that discovered prehistoric caves in Vill (Innsbruck), Austria

- ❖ The **Analysis** is the process of examination, description, classification, and identification of the material remains, including the consideration of its broader meaning. Data analysis is an important part of fieldwork and a necessary preparatory step to making interpretations regarding past human activities.



Archaeology Facts

PUBLIC ROLE IN ARCHAEOLOGY

- ❖ Lot of archaeological sites are discovered by members of the general public, such as farmers, construction workers, or hikers.
- ❖ Numerous archaeology programs have public outreach programs for those who are interested in their work.
- ❖ It is important to remember that, if you discover an artifact, you should leave it where it is and reach out to an archaeologist from the state office or a local university.
- ❖ The artifact will be much more useful if it can be examined in the context it was left and should only be submitted to avoid imminent destruction.



Even children can be involved in archaeology, such as these children screening



Farmers often discover archaeological sites



Name: _____

Basic Archaeology



Color the boxes that contains basic facts related to archaeology.

Archaeology is different from archeology.

A piece of bone is not considered an artifact even if humans used it for some purpose.

Archaeologists use remains, such as old coins, tools, buildings, and garbage, to understand how people lived.

Archaeology is the study of the cultures that lived in the past.

Artifacts don't help build a model of what a culture was like.

Anthropology is the study of human cultures.

The purpose of archaeology is to gather artifacts for art collection.

Archaeology is a subfield of anthropology.

Archaeologists are the people who study archaeology.

Computers, clothing, food, books, and buildings are recently discovered artifacts.

Cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, and linguistics are the other terms for archaeology.

The remains studied are called artifacts.



Basic Archaeology



Answer Key

Archaeology is different from archeology.

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