MAIN IDEAS

1. **Culture** Archaeologists help us understand the material cultures of ancient people.
2. **Culture** Anthropologists study humans and human cultures.
3. **Culture** Archaeologists and anthropologists can change their theories about the past in light of new discoveries.

TAKING NOTES

**Reading Skill: Making Generalizations**

To make generalizations is to make broad judgments based on information. For Lesson 3, use a diagram like the one below to record the details of what archaeologists do. Then write a general statement about the work of archaeologists.

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**Nazca Skull** The Nazca flourished in southern Peru between 200 B.C. and A.D. 600. Archaeologists know that the Nazca produced detailed fabrics because of pieces such as the cap shown with this mummified head.

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**CALIFORNIA STANDARDS**

**HI 1** Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.

**HI 2** Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long- and short-term causal relations.

**HI 5** Students recognize that interpretations of history are subject to change as new information is uncovered.
Discovering the Past

Build on What You Know  You have learned about geographers and mapmakers and the ways their work is important for the study of history. Now you will read about archaeology and anthropology and their relationships to history.

Digging Up the Past

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  How do we learn about ancient societies?

Archaeology  is the recovery and study of physical evidence from the past. The scientists who practice archaeology are called archaeologists. They search for artifacts from particular time periods. An artifact is an object made by a human. Tools, pottery, and jewelry are examples of artifacts.

Archaeologists also look for other evidence of past human activity or material culture. For example, an irrigation ditch might provide an archaeologist with important clues about how people farmed. Archaeologists can even figure out what people ate by studying the animal bones they discarded.

Beginning the Search  All of this information provides archaeologists with clues about the past. But how do archaeologists find these clues? First, they must select a location, or site. Next they survey the site. This involves making a map of the area. Then they collect any artifacts that lie on the surface. The place where each artifact was found is noted on the map.

TERMS & NAMES
archaeology
artifact
excavation
anthropology
culture

Connect to Today
Tower of Ubar  These archaeologists are digging out remains of the south wall and tower of the city of Ubar, on the Arabian peninsula.
What We Learn from Artifacts

This photograph shows an archaeologist carefully cleaning dirt from a sculpture that was found in the Mayan city of Cancuén. Archaeologists and historians can learn a great deal from such artifacts—and from the places they were found.

1. This large sculpture was part of a building that archaeologists think was a palace. The person it represents was probably a king.

2. See how detailed the sculpture is. Great skill was required to make it. This implies that the culture had a group of people who focused on this craft.

3. This carving is of a person. Facial features, such as the nose and lips, reveal what the ancient Maya looked like.

Buried Clues  Archaeologists then dig to find buried evidence. This type of digging is called excavation. After retrieving objects (everything from small beads to large weapons), archaeologists record what they found. They describe, photograph, and count their findings. Archaeologists then preserve artifacts. For example, they might store metal artifacts in a low-humidity environment to prevent rust.

Finally, archaeologists try to draw conclusions from evidence. To do this, they ask questions. An archaeologist might ask, When was the pottery I found made? To answer this question, he or she might use carbon dating. This is a scientific process that is used to estimate the ages of objects that contain carbon. For historians, knowing the date of an artifact is very important because it helps them know the order in which events occurred.

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What is the process archaeologists go through to learn about ancient societies?

Studying Humans

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  What do anthropologists study?

You may also have heard of anthropology. It is different from archaeology, but related. Anthropology is the study of humans and human cultures. Within the study of anthropology are two major areas—physical anthropology and cultural anthropology.

Physical anthropologists study the physical traits of humans, both past and present. For example, they might study how large human brains were 50,000 years ago and compare their findings with the sizes of human brains today.

Vocabulary Strategy
In the word anthropology, -logy is a suffix. Most words containing the suffix -logy refer to sciences, theories, or studies.
**Studying Culture**  Cultural anthropologists study human cultures. A *culture* is a way of life shared by a group of people. It includes the arts, beliefs, customs, language, and technology of a people. Cultural anthropologists study the past and present cultures of the world. Like archaeologists, they study artifacts, but they also study the religious beliefs and values of cultures. Also like archaeologists, anthropologists ask questions and test their conclusions against new evidence. In this way, anthropologists hope to better explain how and why people live the ways they do.

**REVIEW** What types of work do archaeologists and anthropologists do?

## Changing Views of the Past

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** Why do theories about the past change?

Archaeologists and anthropologists use their skills to interpret history. But sometimes interpretations of history can change. The ancient Mayan city of Cancuén (kahn•KWEHN) in what is now the Central American country of Guatemala provides an example of how interpretations of the past can change.

**Rediscovering Cancuén** More than a thousand years ago, Cancuén was a thriving Mayan city. Mayan civilization flourished between A.D. 250 and 900 in Central America. The people created huge temples and palaces. When the Mayan civilization declined, the jungle grew over and hid many of its cities.

Archaeologists discovered Cancuén in 1905. At the time, they thought it was just a small Mayan city. Then, in 2000, archaeologists discovered something amazing. In excavating the site, they found a huge palace. It had 170 rooms, 11 courtyards, and walls 6 feet thick. Smaller houses and workshops surrounded the palace, forming part of a much larger Mayan city.

**Old Theory** All of the Mayan cities found before Cancuén seemed to have temples. Because of this, many archaeologists and anthropologists believed that Mayan cities had a mostly religious function. Mayan kings, scientists thought, based their power on religion and warfare. They thought this until they began to explore and study the ruins of Cancuén.

▲ Margaret Mead
The U.S. anthropologist Margaret Mead studied how culture affects human behavior. She did most of her work on Pacific islands.
New Theory  However, Cancuén is a Mayan city with no temples. After studying the evidence, archaeologists concluded that Cancuén was a center of trade. This new evidence has caused archaeologists and anthropologists to rethink their ideas about the Maya. Perhaps religion played a smaller role in Mayan culture than they had thought.

Experts will continue to debate the role of religion in Mayan cities. Recent advances in historians’ ability to read Mayan writing will add to the discussion. But the important lesson for us is this: new evidence can cause archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians to change their theories about the past. Studying new evidence and questioning current theories are essential tools in learning about history.

REVIEW  What did archaeologists discover after excavating Cancuén?

Lesson Summary
- Archaeologists find and study artifacts.
- Anthropologists study human cultures.
- Views of the past can change in light of new evidence.

Why It Matters Now . . .
Studying the artifacts a society has left behind teaches us about that society. The more we know about the way the world was, the better can be our understanding of the way it is today.

Terms & Names
1. Explain the importance of
   archaeology  excavation  culture
   artifact  anthropology

Using Your Notes
Making Generalizations  Use your completed diagram to answer the following question:
2. What do archaeologists study? (HI 2)

Main Ideas
3. Why does an archaeologist carry out an excavation? (HI 1)
4. What is a culture and what aspects of life does it include? (HI 1)
5. Why is new evidence important to archaeologists and anthropologists? (HI 5)

Critical Thinking
6. Comparing and Contrasting  What different types of information do archaeologists and anthropologists provide for historians? (HI 5)
7. Making Inferences  Why is it important for people researching the past to keep an open mind? (HI 5)

Activity  Recording Artifacts  Make a display of objects that a future archaeologist might find at your house. Draw or photograph them, and write captions that describe what they are used for. (HI 5)