

So, what is archaeology?

Prologue Discussion Questions

1. What does each ring in a tree's cross section represent?
2. What is dendrochronology?
3. What can be learned from a tree's rings?
4. Look at the list of old trees at <http://www.rmtrr.org/oldlist.htm>. For those trees in the United States, geographically, where are most of them concentrated?
5. How might this concentration be explained?
6. What sorts of information can be learned from bones?
7. How does human adaptation differ from the adaptation seen in most other animals?
8. What do archaeologists focus their studies on in order to better understand the past?

40-43 Discussion Questions

1. What are archaeologists attempting to do?
2. What does Feder mean when he says, "Archaeologists are always rewriting the past."?
3. What is the difference between an archaeologist and a paleontologist?
4. Are all archeologists the same?
5. What is material culture?
6. Take the true/false quiz at <http://bama.ua.edu/~alaarch/trueorfalsegame/index.htm>.

Terms to Know

dendrochronology

adaptation

Darwinian evolution

culture

material culture

paleontology

geology

Chapter 1

1. What is the hierarchy of people working on a larger archaeological dig?
2. On projects like Wood Lily, how do teams go about identifying potential dig sites?
3. In a large area, why is it logical to start with a pedestrian survey?
4. Why do such surveys, however, not serve as the best method (in most cases) of determining the final dig site?
5. Why might it be necessary to define a representative sample in a site?
6. What is the purpose of test pits?
7. In what sense can an absence of archaeological evidence in a survey still be valuable?
8. What factors did Feder use to predict the location of a site in Peoples State Park?
9. What was the primary goal of the 1986 season in Peoples State Park?
10. What was the secondary goal, and how did they go about meeting it?
11. Why was Wood Lily chosen for full archaeological excavation?
12. Which difficulties in archaeological interpretation is Feder trying to explain when using the phrase “we see through a glass, darkly”?
13. How can ecofacts help archaeologists gain a more complete understanding of a site and its people?
14. Why is accurate to say that excavation is destructive?
15. How do archaeologists try to deal with this destructiveness?
16. Why are imperfect tools often of more value to archaeologists than perfect ones?
17. What can the presence of exotic materials at a site tell archaeologists?
18. What are wear patterns, and why are they important?
19. Why is it important to record the spatial context of artifacts during an excavation?
20. What evidence led to the conclusion that Wood Lily had been a habitation site?
21. What information led to the belief that Wood Lily had not been a year-round habitation site?
22. What elements make up a culture?
23. Why do the methods used by archaeologists leave an incomplete picture of a culture by their very nature?
24. Why is it unusual to find human remains in sites in places like New England?
25. Under what conditions is it more likely to find human remains?

Terms to Know

survey

test pits

transects

site

topographic map

artifacts

pedestrian survey

representative sample

settlement pattern

excavation

exotic material

spatial context

wear patterns

foragers

hunter-gatherers

nomadic

sedentary

culture