

Distinguishing Fact from Opinion

Name: _____

To identify facts, look for information such as events, dates, and statistics that can be proven to be correct. To identify opinions, look for judgments, beliefs, and feelings a writer or speaker expresses. Read the passage below about the Nazca culture. Then beside each number at the bottom of the page, write "fact" if the underlined phrase with that number is a fact. Write "opinion" if the phrase is an opinion.

[1] One of the most baffling enigmas of archaeology lies spread on the arid plain of the [2] Nazca region, between the Pacific coast of southern Peru and the Andean foothills. It is made up of strange [3] lines stretching across the desert as far as the eye can see, incomprehensible geometric shapes and huge . . . birds and fantastic animals, [4] looking as though they had been drawn by a giant's hand.

[5] The puzzle is made even more intriguing by the fact that often the complete figures [6] can only be seen from an altitude of above 1,000 feet. Understandably, [7] there are some people who imagine that they must have been made by unknown extra-terrestrial beings, who came to earth some thousands of years ago and made contact with pre-Columbian peoples. . . . Unless one is prepared to close one's eyes to the facts as they are known today, [8] it is hard to imagine beings of higher intelligence traveling at the speed of light. . . .

The extraordinary dryness of the plain has protected the ancient Nazca people's [9] strange designs for at least 1,500 years; in a normal climate it is unlikely that they would have lasted until now. [10] The lines are in fact two parallel rows of pebbles, containing iron and iron oxides. Too little rain has fallen to wash the pebbles out of place down the centuries.

from *The World's Last Mysteries* (Pleasantville, New York: Reader's Digest, 1978), 281–282.

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