

**Central Question: How do anthropologists help us understand the past?**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hr:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Today's Task:**

Using the attached Bookmark Tool, read the article below on various discoveries made by anthropologists.

Consider the Central Question:

**How do anthropologists help us understand the past?**

Directions:

1. **First-** Circle the who, when, where, what and why in the Headnote and Attribution
2. **Second-** Consider the fourth question on the Bookmark: Part 1-- "Second: the Source" section:  
→ *What parts of the source seem most important for understanding it? Why?*

Think about this question while you read through the source. Underline the information that seems to be the most important... Remember our Central Question!

3. **Third-** Look at the top of the Bookmark: Part 2. Consider the third question:  
→ What does this source help us understand about the Central Question?

Box information in the article that relates to the Central Question (How do anthropologists help us understand the past?)

4. **Fourth:** Fill in the following CLAIM and EVIDENCE using your annotations.
  - Anthropologists help us understand the past by...
  
  
  
  - One piece of evidence to support my claim:
  
  
  
  - Another piece of evidence to support my claim:

Central Question: How do anthropologists help us understand the past?

## Learning About The Past: Anthropologists study people



**Headnote:** Anthropologists continue to discover artifacts that relate to early humans. With the help of carbon dating, a method used to determine the age of old objects, anthropologists make new hypotheses on what has happened to humans in the past.

**Attribution:** Article written by USHistory.org, adapted by Newsela staff.  
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How do we learn about the past? Scientists and other experts have different ways of figuring out what life was like hundreds and even thousands of years ago.

### Understanding Who We Were And Who We Are Today

The study of history helps humans understand who we were and who we are today. Experts use imagination, shared knowledge and lots of hard work to put together the puzzle pieces of history.

Some of these experts are anthropologists. Anthropology is the study of human societies and culture. The word "anthropology" means "the study of man." Anthropologists study societies old and new. This helps them learn how humans have developed over time.

### A Trail Of Footprints

In 1997, a scientist named David Roberts made an important discovery. Winding its way across a 117,000-year-old ancient sand dune in South Africa was a trail of footprints. The prints were made by human feet. Roberts was the first to spot them. At the time, they were the oldest human footprints ever discovered.

The prints measure eight and a half inches in length. This early human would have worn size 4 shoes.

Finding the footprints didn't surprise Roberts at all. Previously, he had discovered fossilized tracks in a rocky area 60 miles north of Cape Town, South Africa. He had noticed rock pieces there which showed signs of human use. He said, "On a hunch, I began searching for hominid footprints — and found them!" Hominids are a group of primates that include gorillas, chimpanzees and early and modern humans.

### Our Human Past: A Series Of "Firsts"

When did human history begin? We know the earth formed 4.6 billion years ago — an almost unimaginably long time ago. But what about our human past? How far back does it stretch?

There are different ways to answer this question. We can summarize them as a series of "firsts."

- The first hominids appeared more than 2 million years ago.

## **Central Question: How do anthropologists help us understand the past?**

- The first humans appeared more than 100,000 years ago.
- The first human settlements were created 9,000 years ago.
- The first civilizations emerged 6,000 years ago.

### **Living With Aboriginal Peoples**

Some anthropologists live for years at a time with aboriginal, or indigenous, peoples. They record how these people lead their lives apart from modern civilization. This helps researchers draw connections to how early humans might have lived, too.

Margaret Mead was the first to develop this approach. She was one of the most celebrated anthropologists of her generation. In the 1920s, she lived among the Samoan Islanders of the South Pacific.

### **Who “owns” the past?**

Who owns the past? It may sound like an odd question, but it is one anthropologists today have to face, especially in North America. American museums are filled with the skeletons of Native Americans who were unearthed without permission from their living relatives. In 1990, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) ordered that this material be returned to the tribes.

### **Kennewick Man**

At the center of one very bitter argument was Kennewick Man. It is a near-complete human skeleton that was found along the banks of the Columbia River in Kennewick, Washington, in 1996. James C. Chatters was the anthropologist who first examined it. He believed that the skeleton's appearance indicated European — not Native American — ancestry.

To Chatters' astonishment, when the skeleton was dated, it turned out to be more than 9,000 years old. The story made headlines around the world. Immediately, a group of Indian tribes sued for possession. Kennewick Man became the center of a nine-year court case in the U.S. In 2015, a team of scientists announced that Kennewick Man was most likely of Native American descent, not European descent. The scientists had used new techniques to analyze the skeleton's ancient DNA.

In 2016, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that said Kennewick Man's ancient bones must be returned to the five Native American tribes based along the Columbia River. The skeleton was buried in keeping with the tribes' traditions.

### **Scientific Study And Cultural Traditions**

Studying Kennewick Man revealed new information about the earliest inhabitants of the Americas. But it is also important for scientists to be respectful of longstanding cultural traditions. What's the answer? To begin, scientists must establish a more trusting relationship with the people they study.