

GRADE 4, UNIT 2

Indigenous Societies of North America

 STUDENT WORKBOOK



The ancestral Pueblo peoples built dwellings out of sandstone in natural cliff alcoves in the Southwest between 1150 and 1200 CE. Image by Jbjensen1 via Wikimedia, CC BY 4.0.

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Unit 2, Cluster 1 Inquiry Chart

Unit EQ	How do we know that first peoples flourished in North America?
Cluster SQ	What are the theories of how people first arrived in North America?
What questions will we ask?	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 3: We studied evidence of early humans in North America. We put the evidence into two categories: by land or by sea.	
Lesson 4: We read about the land bridge theory and the coastal migration theory. We connected those theories to evidence from the previous lesson.	
Lesson 5: We listened to Indigenous migration stories and mapped the migration routes as told by oral tradition.	

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Notice and Wonder Chart

Directions: You will see a series of four images. For each one, write what you notice from looking at the image and what you wonder about it.

What I Notice	What I Wonder
Image 1	Image 1
Image 2	Image 2
Image 3	Image 3
Image 4	Image 4

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Evidence of Human Migration Notes Organizer

Directions: Discuss the evidence in your slide deck with your group. You can use your own background knowledge in addition to the evidence. For example, can food grow on an ice sheet? Can a person travel more quickly by foot or by boat? Why might there be very little evidence of sea travel? Take notes in the chart below.

What evidence makes you think that first peoples came by land?	What evidence makes you think that first peoples came by sea?

What evidence makes you think that first peoples came by land?	What evidence makes you think that first peoples came by sea?

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Land Bridge Theory Article

Directions: A theory is an explanation based on evidence. Read one theory below that could explain how people first came to North America. Refer to the chart you created during the last lesson. Read the article again, and circle the evidence on your chart that matches this theory.

Evidence of a Land Bridge

During the last ice age, thick ice sheets covered the northern part of Earth. When the ice formed, it trapped a lot of seawater in the ice. This lowered the water level of the ocean and exposed more land. As the water level dropped, a stretch of land was uncovered between Asia and North America. This area is called Beringia. This land bridge was exposed from about 35,000 to 11,000 years ago. The land bridge may have provided a way for the first people to travel from Asia into North America.

However, once in North America, people would have faced a new challenge. Thick ice sheets in Alaska would have blocked people from going further south. A passage through these ice sheets opened up around 14,000 years ago. This means people could have reached southern parts of North America about 13,000 years ago.

Spear points were discovered in New Mexico that date back to 13,000 years ago. They were first found near Clovis, New Mexico, so they are called Clovis points. Clovis points were also found in several areas around North America. Most dated back to around 13,000 years ago.



The land bridge theory proposes that people migrated to North America through Beringia, moving south until they found land that was not covered by ice sheets. Image by Roblespepe via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Challenges to the Land Bridge Theory

Scientists who support this theory still wonder how the first people traveled and why they traveled into North America. Evidence that humans were in North America more than 14,000 years ago challenges this theory.

Text sources:

- National Geographic Society. 2024. "[Map: Bering Land Bridge.](#)"
- National Park Service. 2023. "[Beringia.](#)"
- Roos, Dave. 2025. "[How Early Humans First Reached the Americas: Three Theories.](#)" HISTORY.

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Coastal Migration Theory Article

Directions: A theory is an explanation based on evidence. Read one theory below that could explain how people first came to North America. Refer to the chart you created during the last lesson. Read the article again, and circle the evidence on your chart that matches this theory.

Evidence of Coastal Migration

There is evidence that suggests humans followed the coastline of northeastern Asia and Beringia into North America and South America. Scientists who support the coastal migration theory believe humans followed a “kelp highway” as a source of food along their journey. Kelp is a kind of seaweed that still grows along the coasts today. The coastal migration theory explains how people could have settled in a place called Monte Verde near the tip of South America 18,000 years ago. Evidence of kelp was found in the fireplaces of stone homes at Monte Verde. Scientists also found wooden corner posts that supported huts, scraps of animal hides used for clothing and bedding, and wood and stone tools. Wood and animal hides used by these first peoples were preserved in a swampy bog.



The possible sea route for North and South American migration followed a kelp forest, which could have provided food during the long journey. Base map by Sémhur via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Challenges to the Coastal Migration Theory

Further evidence for this theory is hard to find. Humans settled in North and South America when sea levels were much lower. Now that sea levels are higher, evidence for this theory would be underwater and difficult to locate. Despite these challenges, scientists continue to look for more evidence to support this theory.

Text sources:

- Chambers, Roseanne. 2021. "[The Kelp Highway.](#)"
- National Geographic. 2017. "[Did the First Americans Take a Ride on the Kelp Highway?](#)"
- Strommer, Kristin. 2017. "[The First Americans Were Seafarers, Not Hikers, Paper Says.](#)" OregonNews.

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Mapping Indigenous Migration Stories

Directions: As you watch each video, draw arrows on the map to show the direction that each group's ancestors traveled to reach their homeland. Be ready to discuss how the stories are similar to or different from the migration theories we learned about in class.

Hopi Migration Story



Chickasaw Migration Story



Agua Caliente Migration Story



Cluster 1 Formative Assessment Task

What are the theories about how people first arrived in North America?

Directions: You have learned about different theories that explain how the first people might have arrived in North America. Choose one migration theory to write about. Describe two pieces of evidence that support the theory and explain your reasoning for each piece of evidence. Then explain why we don't know for sure how people first arrived in North America. Use the words in the Word Bank to help you write your response.

Word Bank			
migrate	theory	land bridge	coastal migration

Theory:

Evidence #1:

My reasoning for this evidence:

Evidence #2:

My reasoning for this evidence:

Why don't we know for sure how people first arrived in North America?

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Unit 2, Cluster 2 Inquiry Chart

Unit EQ	How do we know that first peoples flourished in North America?
Cluster SQ	What can evidence tell us about how first peoples organized themselves into societies?
What questions will we ask?	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 8: We watched a video and discussed what archaeologists can learn from fossilized footprints.	
Lesson 9: We examined artifacts from different early societies in North America to understand how first peoples lived and worked together.	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 10: We learned about complex societies and examined features that show how first peoples organized themselves into societies in North America.	

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White Sands Archaeology Notes Organizer

Directions: Take notes from the video to respond to the questions below. Be ready to share your responses with the class.

(0:58): Where were footprints discovered?

(0:58) What type of evidence are the footprints?

(3:19): What evidence did archaeologists find that showed humans and Ice Age animals were at White Sands at the same time?

(4:24) What can the footprints tell us about how people lived and interacted at White Sands?

(5:24) How old are the footprints?

(5:24) Why do archaeologists think the age of these footprints is so important?

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Artifact Stations Notes Organizer

Directions: Use this handout to record your observations, inferences, and questions at each artifact station.

Station 1: Decorated Clay Objects

SEE What do I observe or notice?	THINK What does this tell me about how people lived?	WONDER What questions do I still have?

Station 2: Black-on-White Pottery

SEE What do I observe or notice?	THINK What does this tell me about how people lived?	WONDER What questions do I still have?

Station 3: Warrior Sculptures

SEE What do I observe or notice?	THINK What does this tell me about how people lived?	WONDER What questions do I still have?

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Society Scavenger Hunt

Directions: Work with your team to complete the scavenger hunt using your Society Card Deck. You can use evidence from the artifact images and the text on each card.

Find a society that created art or had religious ceremonies.

Which society did you find?

What evidence shows this?

Find a society that grew crops or farmed.

Which society did you find?

What evidence shows this?

Find a society that lived in a very challenging environment (very hot, very cold, or very dry).

Which society did you find?

What did they do to adapt and survive in that environment?

Choose two societies. How were their homes or shelters different based on where they lived?

Society 1:

Society 2:

How were their homes different?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Cluster 2 Formative Assessment Task

What can evidence tell us about how first peoples organized themselves into societies?

Part 1

Choose ONE society from the Society Card Deck. List three features of this society and evidence for each feature.

Features of Complex Society			
settlements	food storage	agriculture	government
specialized jobs	art	religion	

Society name:

Time period:

Feature	Evidence

Look at the artifact on your society card. Why is it relevant for answering the Cluster 2 Supporting Question?

The ___ is relevant because it shows ___.

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Unit 2, Cluster 3 Inquiry Chart

Unit EQ	How do we know that first peoples flourished in North America?
Cluster SQ	Why is it important to preserve archaeological sites of first peoples?
What questions will we ask?	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 13: We made a model showing the stratigraphy of an archaeological site and then asked questions about it.	
Lesson 14: We analyzed sources about Teotihuacan. We highlighted important details about people who lived there and how the site is being preserved.	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 15: We created a visual storyboard showing the rise and fall of the large Mississippian city at Cahokia Mounds and how it is being preserved today.	
Lesson 16: We watched a video that features Indigenous people describing the ancient complex society at Mesa Verde. We discussed the connection to current-day Indigenous peoples.	

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Teotihuacan Reading

Directions: Read the article below to learn about this archaeological site. Then, highlight evidence to help answer the questions below.

1. Highlight **ONE** sentence that helps you answer this question: What have archaeologists learned about Teotihuacan by studying the site?
2. Highlight **ONE** sentence that helps you answer this question: How is this archaeological site being preserved?

Where Is Teotihuacan?

Teotihuacan was an ancient city in what is now central Mexico. It was settled about 2,400 years ago. People lived there for about 800 years. At its peak, the population was around 200,000 people. That's close to the population of Worcester, the second-largest city in Massachusetts.

Who Built Teotihuacan?

We don't know who built Teotihuacan or why they left the city. About 500 years after people left, the Aztecs found it. The Aztecs named it Teotihuacan, meaning "the place where the gods were created." The Aztecs also named all of the buildings that they found on the site.

What Do We Know About the People of Teotihuacan?

The people of Teotihuacan created a city with a grid layout. There were around 2,000 apartment homes. There were also several pyramids, plazas, and temples. There were palaces for the rulers.

The people of Teotihuacan had a simple written language using symbols for words. The art found at Teotihuacan shows that people believed in many gods. The primary god was shown as a spider goddess.

Other artifacts show the city traded goods with other civilizations in the area. They produced spear and dart heads made of a sharp volcanic stone. They bought cotton, cacao, feathers, and shells from other areas.

Some people in Teotihuacan were farmers. They grew beans, avocados, peppers, and squash. They also raised chickens and turkeys.

How Is the Archaeological Site of Teotihuacan Being Preserved?

It is important to preserve this archaeological site. It needs to be kept safe from people who want the land for new buildings or farming. The structures are also breaking down over time.

Several groups are working to preserve the site. The World Monuments Fund has paid to restore some of the art. They have also helped control tourism. The site is owned by the Mexican government. Mexico has created an agency to protect and conserve the site. It is also a World Heritage Site. This means an international group called UNESCO gives it legal protection.

Text sources:

- HISTORY.com editors. 2025. "[Ancient Americas: Teotihuacan.](#)"
- UNESCO. n.d. "[Pre-Hispanic City of Teotihuacan.](#)"
- World Monuments Fund. n.d. "[Our Work / Projects and Programs: Teotihuacan.](#)"

Partner Responses

Directions: Compare what you highlighted with what your partner highlighted. If you both highlighted the same sentence, go back and highlight a new sentence. Then, work with your partner to write two sentences to answer each question below. Use both pieces of evidence from the article, but write it in your own words.

1. What have archaeologists learned about Teotihuacan by studying the site?

*Archaeologists have learned that the people of Teotihuacan ___ and ___.
This shows that ___.*

2. How is this archaeological site being preserved?

*The archaeological site is being preserved by ___.
Groups are protecting Teotihuacan by ___.*

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Lesson 15 Exit Ticket

Why is it important to preserve Cahokia Mounds?

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Mesa Verde Notes Organizer

Directions: Watch excerpts from the video to learn about why Mesa Verde is important to Indigenous peoples and what we can learn from visiting and studying the archaeological site.

1. Why is Mesa Verde important to Indigenous peoples?

2. What can we learn from visiting and studying Mesa Verde?

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Inquiry Circle Prep

Directions: Use this handout to prepare your thinking for the Inquiry Circle discussion. You can write sentences, jot down bullet points, draw sketches, or use another method that works for you.

Question	Your Thinking
<p>Think about the three archaeological sites you learned about.</p> <p>What's one detail that stuck with you?</p> <p>What did it teach you about how people lived?</p>	

Question	Your Thinking
<p>Imagine these archaeological sites were destroyed or lost.</p> <p>What would we lose?</p> <p>What wouldn't we know?</p>	
<p>Why is it important to preserve archaeological sites of first peoples?</p>	

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Cluster 3 Formative Assessment Task

Part 1: Analyze a photograph of an archaeological site.

Directions: Choose one photograph of an archaeological site to analyze. Then, identify key information about the photograph and explain how it is relevant to the Cluster 3 Supporting Question.

Which photograph did you choose? Circle one:

Teotihuacan

Cahokia Mounds

Mesa Verde

Answer the following questions about the photograph you chose.

1. What does this source show?

2. Where are these structures located?

3. When were these structures built?

4. How does this photograph help us understand why we should preserve archaeological sites?

Part 2: Explain why preservation is important.

Directions: Throughout this cluster, you studied three archaeological sites: Teotihuacan, Cahokia Mounds, and Mesa Verde. Use evidence from the photograph you analyzed in Part 1 and what you learned about all three sites to answer the Cluster 3 Supporting Question: Why is it important to preserve archaeological sites of first peoples?
