

Penn Museum

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM
of ARCHAEOLOGY *and* ANTHROPOLOGY

3260 South Street – Philadelphia, PA 19104-6324
(215) 898-4015 www.penn.museum

WELCOME TO OUR MUSEUM! HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Have you ever put together a puzzle? If you are like most people you probably try to put the straight edge pieces together first so that you can have a frame for the rest of the picture. Perhaps you join the rest of the pieces by matching shapes and colors together by using the picture on top of the box. You probably have to try several pieces together before you find the proper match.

Trying to build a picture of an ancient culture is similar to putting together a picture from a mound of puzzle pieces. That is what anthropologists and archaeologists do: they try to match pieces of information about people and their way of life to give us a picture of what those folks were like. Only they do not have the finished picture on top of the puzzle box to guide them. What they do know, though, is some of the basic things that we also know about ourselves. To name a few: we live and we die, we eat and drink, we need protection from the environment, we have relationships with our family and friends, we have a way of communicating with each other, we like and value certain things, we are afraid and suspicious of other things, and so on. A lot of anthropologists' and archaeologists' work is putting many different ideas together to try and develop an accurate picture of a culture. This can take years.

What you will see in each gallery is an assortment of the puzzle pieces that archaeologists and anthropologists have worked with to discover something about the way of life and people of a particular culture. Try to imagine that you are an archaeologist or anthropologist putting together a picture of how people lived with these pieces. What do you think you would need to know in order to do this? Think of some questions you could ask to get this information. If you are having a guided tour of the museum, your tour guide is someone who can help you answer those questions. Use your tour guide as you might use a picture on the top of the puzzle box to get as much information as you can about the pieces and how they were discovered and put together. Where else can you get help with your questions? Until your tour, here are some related words to look up and talk about:

Words to Learn

artifact	ecology	anthropology
ceremony	culture	supernatural
pre-historic vs. historic	archaeology	environment
ritual	mythology	civilization
adaptation	status	technology
social organization	migration	belief system