

Answer each of the following questions with an essay. Be sure to include specific examples that support your thesis and conclusions.

1. Ancient Americans and their descendants resided in North America for thousands of years before Europeans arrived. Write an essay in which you describe how archaeological discoveries helped scholars better understand the migration of humans into the Americas, provide an overview of the origins of these first Americans and the geological conditions that facilitated their migration, and explain how the interaction between Native Americans and the environment created the astounding variety of cultures that existed when Europeans began to explore the New World.
2. Archaic hunters and gatherers throughout North America shared some common traits but also lived very differently. Write an essay that explains how various natural environments produced differing hunter-gatherer cultures. What implications did the variation in cultures have for archaic peoples?
3. Beginning about 4000 B.P., distinctive southwestern cultures began to depend on agriculture and build permanent settlements. Discuss the cultures and challenges of the ancient Americans found in present-day Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado.
4. Scholars believe that around 2500 B.P., some Woodland cultures organized as chiefdoms. These chiefdoms produced hierarchical and centralized power structures. What do the artifacts from these cultures suggest about the roles played by chiefs? Why were these cultures not in existence at the time of European arrival?
5. When the first European explorers encountered the culture of the Mexica in the late fifteenth century, they were astounded at the complexity of Mexican society and the wealth of their empire. Explain the conditions existing within this culture that made possible the achievements of the Mexica. Include a discussion of the power structure that permeated and controlled their society.

Answer Key

1. Answer would ideally include:

Summary of Archaeological Discoveries: Archaeologists study human artifacts, animal bones, and environmental features in order to paint a picture of ancient Americans. One important example is the Clovis point, which indicated human occupation of North and Central America as early as 13,500 B.P. to 13,000 B.P. Another significant discovery was the Folsom point, which indicated that ancient Americans were hunting bison on the Great Plains as early as 10,000 B.P.

Origins of First Americans: The first Americans were people who had already adapted to the cold environment of present-day Siberia. A cold spell lasting from 25,000 B.P. to 14,000 B.P. exposed a land bridge between Asian Siberia and American Alaska that allowed Siberian hunters to follow herds of mammoth, bison, and other animals across that land to North America.

Reasons for Cultural Diversity: Early North American settlers shared a common ancestry and way of life that made use of the Clovis point to hunt large animals. When mammoths and other large animals became extinct in about 11,000 B.P., Paleo-Indians began to prey more intensively on smaller animals and devote more energy to foraging. These changes led to great cultural diversity as Native American groups adapted hunting and gathering techniques to many different natural environments throughout the hemisphere.

2. Answer would ideally include:

Common Traits among Hunter/Gatherers: The Archaic cultures that descended from Paleo-Indians all relied on some combination of hunting for animals and foraging for plants to supply food. Like their Paleo-Indian ancestors, Archaic Indians hunted with spears, but they also killed smaller animals with traps, nets, and hooks. Archaic peoples also used a variety of stone tools to prepare food from wild plants. The particular ways that different groups pursued hunting, gathering, and the preparation and storage of their food, however, were shaped by their environments.

Great Plains Hunters: Archaic groups that lived on the Great Plains had access to herds of bison that grazed there, which constituted their primary food source. These groups hunted bison using Folsom points and trapping techniques, and they moved constantly to maintain contact with their prey. Around A.D. 500, they acquired bows and arrows from groups in the North and also used them in their hunting.

Great Basin Cultures: The Great Basin was a region of great environmental diversity. The Great Basin Indians who lived along marshes and lakes ate fish, while others killed and ate deer and antelope and smaller game. Because supplies of animal food were not consistent, all Indians in this region relied heavily on plants for food, and they developed techniques to collect and store them.

Pacific Coast Cultures: The Pacific coast had many different environments, which encouraged great diversity among the people who lived there. California contained 500 separate tribes speaking 90 languages. Plentiful food sources meant that these groups lived in permanent settlements with relatively large populations, and that some people could pursue activities that were not directly related to food production, such as woodworking. The diversity of cultures in this area allowed the development of trade but also created conflicts and warfare.

Eastern Woodland Cultures: Archaic people living in Eastern forests hunted deer for food and for the hides and bones, which they crafted into clothing, weapons, needles, and other tools. They also gathered edible plants, seeds, and nuts and, by 4000 B.P., added agriculture and pottery-making to their hunter-gatherer lifestyles.

Implications of Diversity: Diverse hunter-gatherer cultures were well adapted to their particular environments, and most lasted until the Europeans' arrival in the late fifteenth century. Their low population density, small populations, reliance on hunting and gathering, and vast diversity probably made these groups more vulnerable once Europeans arrived.

3. *Answer would ideally include:*

Southwestern Cultures: All southwestern peoples were forced to adapt to dry climates and unreliable wild food supplies. Around 3500 B.P., these groups began to cultivate corn; this restricted their migratory habits and led them to become irrigation experts.

Mogollon Culture: This group appeared throughout southern New Mexico about A.D. 200. The Mogollon settlements were based on pit houses, which may have been predecessors of kivas. The reasons for the decline of the Mogollon culture about A.D. 900 remain obscure.

Hohokam Culture: These people migrated into Arizona from Mexico around A.D. 500. Their economy was based on sophisticated irrigation canals, and their culture was heavily influenced by Mexican cultural practices. The decline of the Hohokams around A.D. 1400 may have been due to the rising salinity of the soil.

Anasazi Culture: The Anasazi began to flourish about A.D. 100, relying on irrigation much like that of their neighbors. Around A.D. 1000, some moved to large, multistory cliff dwellings while others developed huge, stone-walled pueblos. A fifty-year drought may have triggered the disappearance of the Anasazi culture.

4. *Answer would ideally include:*

Background on Woodland Cultures and Chiefdoms: Around 2500 B.P., Eastern Woodland cultures, which relied on hunting-gathering and agriculture for food, began to construct burial mounds and other earthworks that suggest the existence of social and political hierarchies called chiefdoms.

Adena Burial Mounds: Burial mounds, such as those made by the Adena people in

Ohio, were large structures that frequently contained grave goods such as spear points, stone pipes, and mica crafted into complex shapes. The size of the mounds, the labor and organization required to build them, and the differences in the artifacts buried with certain individuals suggest that one person—a chief—commanded the labor and obedience of large numbers of people who comprised his chiefdom.

Hopewell Mounds: The mounds built by the Hopewell people were even larger than those of the Adena and contained high-quality crafts. Grave goods in the Hopewell sites testify to the Hopewell's participation in a thriving trade network. Archaeologists believe the Hopewell chiefs must have played an important role in such interregional trade.

Mississippian Mounds: Major Mississippian mounds had platforms on top for ceremonies and for the residences of great chiefs. Cahokians also erected woodhenges, which may have been built for celestial observations.

Disappearance of Chiefdoms: At the time of European arrival, most Mississippi cultures lived in small dispersed villages supported by both hunting-gathering and agriculture. Chiefs no longer commanded the sweeping powers they once enjoyed. Bows and arrows, along with agriculture, may have made small settlements more self-sufficient and therefore less dependent on chiefs.

5. *Answer would ideally include:*

Background on Mexica: The empire rose to prominence by 1430 when Mexica warriors asserted their dominance over their former allies and ruled an area that geographically and demographically surpassed that of Spain and Portugal combined.

Focus on War and Empire-Building: The Mexica Empire was built and led by warriors who worshiped the war god Huitzilopochtli, and who waged constant battles against surrounding cultures to capture people for sacrifice and to demonstrate their own bravery. These warriors made up the Mexican nobility, supported by a smaller group of priests. This elite group commanded the religious and military power necessary to gain the obedience of millions of other people in the provinces.

Tribute System: Mexican leaders also used their religious and military power to collect tribute from conquered tribes. Tribute was not money but, rather, goods produced by conquered people—including textiles, basic food products, and luxury items—and candidates for human sacrifice. This system redistributed wealth from the conquered to the conquerors and made the empire's stunning achievements possible.