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[Course Number and Time]
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[Date]

Summary for Chapter 1 – “Ancient America Before 1865”

Summary:

This chapter describes how the Americas were first populated and the life and culture of the people who lived in the region prior to the explorations of Christopher Columbus. The people that Columbus “discovered,” who we call Native Americans, had been living in the area for thousands of years. During that time, they developed a rich culture. Even though many groups didn’t have a formal written language, we have learned about their cultures through artifacts. (75 words)

Key Points:

Archaeology is key to understanding the world of early Americans because many of their cultures did not leave a written language. Through the discovery and examination of artifacts, researchers have pieced together information about the lifeways of these people. The chapter showcases several artifacts like the Clovis point and spear straightener, fishhooks, necklaces, shoes, and even a model ball court. These show us how they hunted their food and worshipped their gods. (72 words)

“Homo sapien” is the scientific term for modern humans. I was interested to learn that the first humans have been traced to African both through archaeology and DNA. They evolved around 400,000 BP, and by 25,000 BP migrated out of Africa, and on to Europe and Asia. From there they crossed Beringia to the Americas, and fanned out across the continents. (61 words)

There was a great deal of diversity among the early Native Americans. The textbook identifies groups like the Great Basin Indians who, in addition to gathering food, hunted and fished. The California peoples encompassed some 500 different tribes. Among the Woodland Indians along the east coast, the

Hopewell Indians developed an elaborate culture, documented by the remains of their settlements. (60 words)

Mexicas, also known as Aztecs, were one of the most dominant groups in South America. At their height, their population ranged between 8 and 25 million people (pg. 25). They were fierce warriors who worshipped Huitzilopochtli, the god of war, and conquered other nations that lived around their stronghold of Lake Texcoco. Their civilization featured massive architectural structures, paintings, textiles, and a system of writing. The Mexicas are also remembered in history for their brutal ritual tributes, during which they executed captives in honor of their deities. (87 words)

Review Questions:

1. Historians rely on the work of archaeologists because many early cultures didn't develop written languages. For this reason, we don't have scrolls, tablets, letters, diaries, or any other type of document that can tell us about them. Instead of written records, archaeologists use artifact to reveal the mysteries of the past. Through carbon dating and comparison they can piece together an understanding of how people in the past lived. (70 words)
2. According to the text, humans migrated into the Americas in the pursuit of large game animals. These Paleo-Indians were largely hunters, so they were forced to follow the migration of the herds. Also changes in the climate made their travel possible, as melting ice and lower sea levels revealed Beringia, allowing them to walk from Siberia into the area of modern-day Alaska. (63 words)
3. Archaic Native Americans transitioned from hunting big game to foraging and hunting small game because of the animals that were available. Large animals died out. Also, the ecology of the Americas was able to sustain life through its rich offerings of plants, grains, and fruits. These developments also witnessed the increased use of tools. (55 words)

4. Food gathering required two different technologies: tools and storage. Some of these cultures began to cultivate crops instead of foraging. Some of the most popular were squash, corn, and beans. Archaeologists also document the use of pottery to store food and water. The development of agriculture also had another outcome – settlement instead of migration. (55 words)
5. People living in the Western Hemisphere before 1490s shared cultural features because they were in contact with one another. Contact through trade would allow the exchange of ideas and sharing of technology. Likewise, because they living in environments that were somewhat similar, they used the same resources from the purpose of surviving. (53 words)
6. In the Mexican culture, tribute was a demonstration of power relations. In exchange for payments in goods (foodstuff, cloth, etc.) and other valuables, weaker tribes appeased stronger tribes thereby protecting themselves from invasion. The Mexicas were able to demand this tribute and enforce its collection because of their superior military force. (52 words)

Questions:

1. How did the Mexicas develop the technology to construct their temples?
2. Who were the Native Americans who first settled in Florida?
3. Was there an African presence in the Western Hemisphere before the Europeans?

Connections:

We often take for granted that the land we now know as the United States was inhabited by people long before our country was founded. More attention should be paid to that fact. Today, one hardly ever encounters a Native American. They are almost completely wiped from the landscape, and

their culture remains underappreciated. When it comes to tragic history on these shores, Native Americans and African Americans have parallel histories.