

LESSON 2



PREVIEW

Focus on the Main Idea

Early cultures developed in different parts of North America.

PLACES

Cahokia
Four Corners
Mesa Verde

VOCABULARY

ceremony
mesa
drought

PEOPLE

Nampeyo



► Great Serpent Mound in Ohio.

3,000 years ago

3,000 years ago
Mound Builders culture develops east of the Mississippi River

2,000 years ago

2,500 years ago
Inuit reach Alaska from Asia

2,000 years ago
The Anasazi culture develops in the Southwest

Early American Cultures

You Are There

You're looking out the window of the plane as you fly over southwestern Ohio. All of a sudden

something amazing catches your eye. You see what looks like a huge snake that seems to be slithering its way across the countryside. It looks as if it is built out of mounds of soil. It's probably about three feet high,

as tall as you may have been in kindergarten or first grade.

What in the world can this be, you wonder. Is it an unusual landform? You think it must have been built by people. But who would have built it, and why? Was it built recently or long ago? What is this mysterious mound?



Summarize As you read, look for details to help you summarize information about the different cultures that developed in North America.

The Mound Builders

The snake-like mound that you just read about is real. Called the Great Serpent Mound, it is near Hillsboro, Ohio. It was built more than 1,000 years ago by people often called the Mound Builders. They were one of several early American Indian groups that once flourished in North America, and then disappeared. Today we find signs of towns that no longer exist in many parts of our continent.

The Mound Builders culture began about 3,000 years ago and lasted about 2,500 years. Most Mound Builders lived east of the Mississippi River. The land there is rich in forests, fertile soil, lakes, and rivers. The Mound Builders were farmers who lived in settled communities. Their main crop was corn.


The Mound Builders were not a single group of people. The three main groups were the Adena, Hopewell, and Mississippians. They built thousands of mounds, in many different shapes. At **Cahokia** (kuh HO kee uh) in present-day Illinois, a mound rises 100 feet, as tall as a 10-story building.

Some mounds were burial places for important chiefs. Some, like the Great Serpent Mound, may have been built to honor animal spirits that were part of the Mound Builders'

religion. Many of the mounds had platforms where religious or other ceremonies were held. A **ceremony** is an activity done for a special purpose or event, such as a birth, wedding, or death.

The Mound Builders left many clues about their way of life for archaeologists to study. Being able to build such enormous structures shows that they were well organized. Hundreds or even thousands of workers had to be directed to dig up tons of earth with the hand tools available. Then the earth had to be moved—often over long distances—to a mound location. Finally, workers had to create the shape the builder planned.

Artifacts also tell us that trade was important to their builders. Knives found in mounds were carved from a rock called obsidian that came from the Rocky Mountains, hundreds of miles to the west. Seashells used in jewelry came from the Gulf of Mexico, hundreds of miles to the south. Copper came hundreds of miles from near the Great Lakes, to the north. Mica, a glittering mineral the people of Cahokia prized, came from the Appalachian Mountains far to the east.

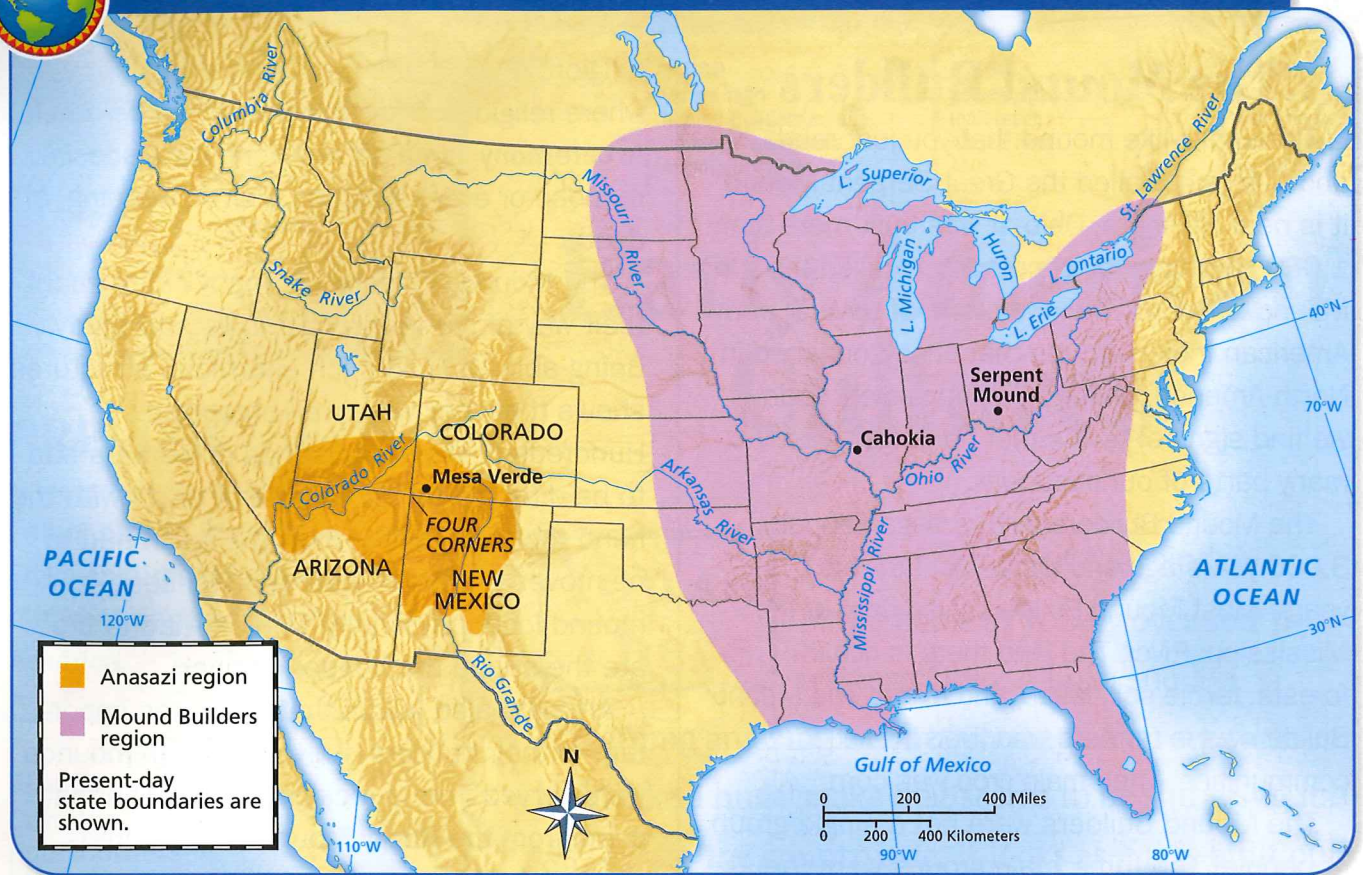
REVIEW What do the mounds tell us about the culture of the people who built them?  **Summarize**

► **This mound can be seen today at Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site in Illinois.**





The Anasazi and Mound Builders



► The Anasazi and Mound Builders established early cultures in what today is the United States.

MAP SKILL Human-Environment Interaction What major rivers could the Mound Builders have used for water and travel?

The Anasazi

Another early farming group, called the Anasazi (ahn uh SAH zee), lived in what is today the Southwest of the United States. Their name is a Navajo Indian word for “the old ones.” Anasazi communities were located in an area today called the **Four Corners**. Four present-day states come together here. Find this area on the map on this page. What are the four states? The Anasazi lived in this area from about the year 100 to about 1300.

The Anasazi grew corn, squash, beans, and pumpkins. Like the Mound Builders, they lived in permanent communities. Although the climate of the Four Corners region is dry, it did not limit the Anasazi’s farming. They

dug ditches to carry water from streams to the crops in their fields. The Anasazi were the first people to use irrigation in what would become the United States.

The Anasazi are also known as the “Cliff Dwellers” because they sometimes carved houses into the sides of cliffs. They also built apartment-style buildings several stories high on the top of mesas. A **mesa** is a high, flat landform that rises steeply from the land around it. Mesa means “table” in Spanish.

Let’s visit the Anasazi community of **Mesa Verde**, in present-day Colorado. Here you can see a large village built into steep cliffs. If you look up, you see large overhanging rocks. These protect the people from bad weather as well as from attack by their enemies.



► Today the Cliff Palace and other Anasazi cliff dwellings are protected as part of Mesa Verde National Park.

The largest building is the Cliff Palace, which has about 150 rooms. It also has 23 kivas, which are large underground rooms. Kivas are important to Anasazi religion. They are where religious ceremonies are held. Only men are allowed to enter a kiva.

All around you, people are using beautiful woven baskets. They are so tightly and expertly woven that they can even hold water and be used for cooking. Hot coals are put into the baskets with corn that has been ground into flour, beans, and other foods to make a stew.

Anasazi culture reached its height in the 1100s. But then something mysterious happened. The Anasazi suddenly abandoned their villages in the Four Corners region. Why did they leave? Where did they go? No one knows for sure.

One theory is that a **drought**, or a long period without rain, forced them to leave. Streams dried up and irrigation became impossible. The Anasazi had to move to places where there was enough water for farming.

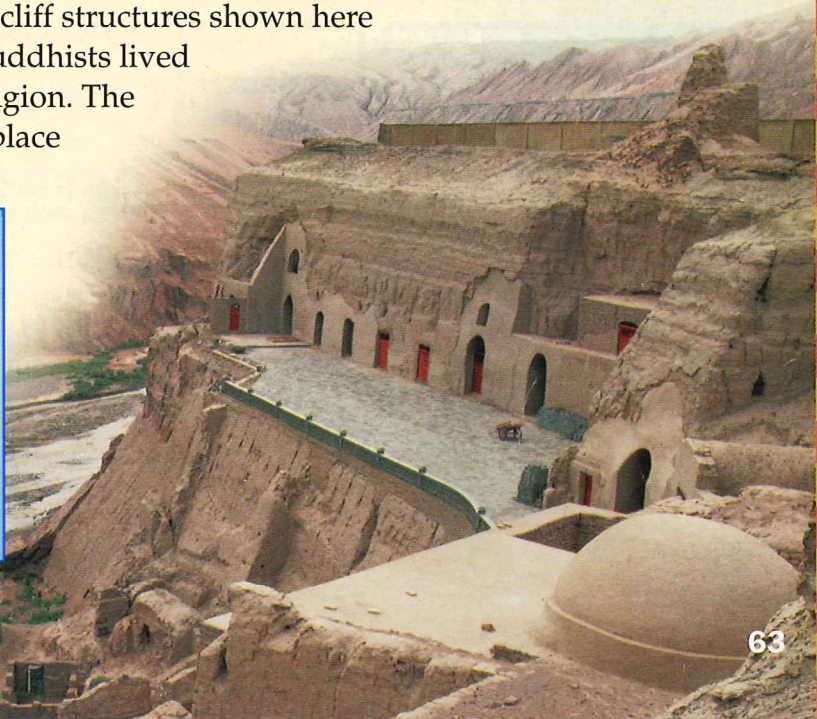
Historians believe that the Pueblo peoples of today's Southwest, including the Hopi, are descended from the Anasazi. In the Biography feature on page 65, you can read about a Pueblo woman named **Nampeyo** who found a way to re-create the ancient way of making pottery.

REVIEW What is a possible cause for the disappearance of the Anasazi from the Four Corners region? **Cause and Effect**



Cliff Dwellers in China

The Anasazi were not the only people to carve "apartments" into cliffs. In about the year 400, Buddhists were carving buildings into the cliffs at Bezeklik in northwestern China. The cliff structures shown here were monasteries, or places where Buddhists lived and studied the teachings of their religion. The monasteries also served as a resting place for traveling merchants.



The Inuit

Far to the north, in what is today Canada, live people who call themselves Inuit (IN oo it), meaning "the people." Like the first Americans, the Inuit traveled from Asia to North America. But the Inuit came much later, probably about

2,500 years ago. Today they make their homes across the frozen lands near the Arctic Ocean, from Alaska through Canada and on to Greenland.



► The Inuit are known for their beautiful crafts, such as this sculpture of an owl.

The Inuit adapted to life in the cold climate. They hunted whales, walruses, and seals in the Arctic waters. They developed the kayak, a light, one-person boat that is used for hunting and transportation. In the winter some Inuit still build traditional houses called igloos from blocks of packed snow.

REVIEW What do the Inuit have in common with the first Americans?

Compare and Contrast

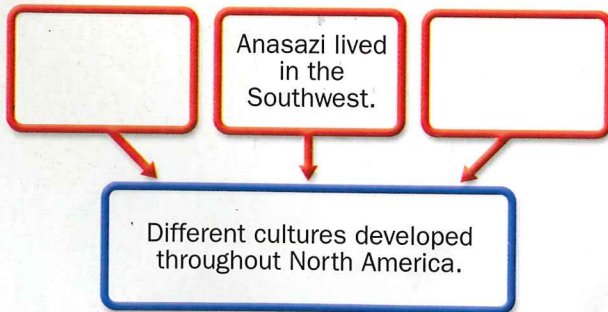
Summarize the Lesson

- 3,000 years ago American Indian groups began building mounds in eastern North America.
- 2,500 years ago Inuit reached Alaska from Asia.
- 2,000 years ago The Anasazi culture developed in the Southwest.

LESSON 2 REVIEW

Check Facts and Main Ideas

1. 🔄 **Summarize** On a separate sheet of paper, fill in the missing details that support the summary.



2. Why did the people known as Mound Builders build mounds?

3. Explain how the Anasazi were able to farm in the desert.
4. How did the Inuit adapt to life in the cold climate near the Arctic Ocean?
5. **Critical Thinking: Compare and Contrast** Compare and contrast the cultures of the Mound Builders, Anasazi, and Inuit.

Link to Writing

Write a Letter Write a letter to a government official encouraging the protection of an ancient site such as Great Serpent Mound.