

Exploring Our Heritage

SERPENT MOUND



Learning Objectives

Students will learn about the late prehistoric Indians and their cultural practices by studying the Fort Ancient Indian culture and the giant earthwork Serpent Mound.

Lesson Overview

Students will

- ❖ Watch video on the Serpent Mound
- ❖ Examine images of Fort Ancient artifacts
- ❖ Create a “mock” cover and articles for *National Geographic* magazine
- ❖ Write an acrostic poem about the Serpent Mound

Teacher Background

The term Fort Ancient refers to a Native American culture that thrived between 1000-1650 A.D. in what is now modern day southern Ohio and northern Kentucky. The culture was named after the site “Fort Ancient,” a large settlement with extensive mounded earthworks located in southwestern Ohio, although these mounds are now believed to have been created by the Hopewell people. In fact, the Fort Ancient people were mound builders thought to be *descended* from the Hopewell Culture. Today, scholars believe the Fort Ancient Indians are the likely ancestors of the Shawnee Indians.

The Fort Ancient people were Ohio’s first farmers and lived in settlements comprised of a number of circular or rectangular wattle and daub houses surrounding a central open area. The buildings in the settlements, were only semi-permanent, and lasted for approximately one to two generations. The Fort Ancient people devised a number of tools to help with their farming and hunting. Notable artifacts include the clamshell hoe, bow and arrow, fish hooks, other bone farming implements, and ceramic pottery.

Recent archeological evidence suggests that the Fort Ancient culture was responsible for building the Serpent Mound, a magnificent effigy earthwork located in Adams County, Ohio. The mound, constructed along the plateau of a crater, had previously been attributed to the Adena and Hopewell Cultures. Serpent Mound is the largest effigy mound in the world and is thought to represent an uncoiling serpent. Carbon dating has suggested

a date of 1070 A.D. for its construction. Today, the site is on the National Register of Historic Places and has been nominated to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

As with the Adena culture, mounds were often used for burials. Though the Fort Ancient people were a moundbuilding culture, the mounds constructed by the Fort Ancient did not serve a funerary function, nor was the Serpent Mound used for burials. Since the Fort Ancient people left no written records, the function of the mound can never truly be confirmed. There are, however, several popular theories that suggest that this colossal earthwork was used as a solar calendar with different points along the curves of the serpent aligned to the seasonal solstices. Some archeologists and anthropologists have theorized that “astrological calendars” such as these were used to help in farming by marking important dates like spring planting and fall harvest, times of year that would have been important to the Fort Ancient people who were Ohio’s first true farmers.



Ohio Academic Content Standards

GRADE

4

History

1. Construct timelines with evenly spaced intervals for years, decades and centuries to show the order of significant events in Ohio history.

People in Societies

1. Describe the cultural practices and products of various groups that have settled in Ohio over time:
 - a. The Paleo Indians, Archaic Indians, Woodland Indians (Adena and Hopewell) and Late Prehistoric Indians (Fort Ancient).

Social Studies Skills and Methods

3. Use primary and secondary sources to answer questions about Ohio history.
4. Describe how archaeologists and historians study and interpret the past.



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MATERIALS

Computer or Internet Access (teacher only)
8½x11 white drawing paper
Markers, colored pencils, crayons
Old *National Geographic* magazines
Library collection of books on Fort Ancient culture and Serpent Mound

SUGGESTED WEB SITE AND RESOURCES

Ohio History Central

<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org>

This site provides information on Ohio history and is an excellent source for researching Native Americans in Ohio. Students can search on key terms like “Serpent Mound” and “Fort Ancient” to help conduct their research.

TEACHER VOCABULARY

Acrostic Poem	Effigy
Adena Indians	Hopewell Indians
Anthropologist	Fort Ancient Indians
Archaeologist	Solstice
Artifact	Waddle and Daub construction
Earthwork	

Instructional Procedure

What I Learned

1. Begin by asking the class if anyone has been to see the Great Serpent Mound. Next, explain that there were a number of prehistoric Native Americans that lived in Ohio hundreds of years before settlers came to the land.
2. Now explain that some of the late prehistoric Native American peoples constructed large earthen mounds in the shapes of animals and symbols.
3. Finally describe Serpent Mound, the famous Fort Ancient earthwork, and point out the location of Peebles, Ohio on a map. Then have students watch the *Our Ohio* video *Serpent Mound* and have the students complete the **What I Learned** worksheet while watching.

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What Could It Be?

1. Begin by reviewing what primary sources are with the class. Explain that an artifact is any product that humans have created and are a type of primary source. As a class identify different types of artifacts and write these answers on the board.
2. Next let students know they will look at images of artifacts that were excavated by archaeologists at Fort Ancient sites.
3. Review with the class how archaeologists work and how they can discover things about the past by examining artifacts they uncover.
4. Distribute the **What Could It Be** worksheets and have students complete individually or in small groups.

National Geographic: The Great Serpent Mound

1. Students should have already watched the *Our Ohio* video *Serpent Mound* and completed the **What I Learned** activity. Continue the discussion about the Serpent Mound and the Fort Ancient Indians on the board. Using teacher research, information from the video, and information provided in the **Teacher Overview** divide the board into two sections. One section will contain facts about the Serpent Mound. The other section will contain information about the Fort Ancient Indians. Besides facts, include pictures that will help visually demonstrate the facts. (More information can be found at <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org> and performing a search on Serpent Mound)
2. After the teacher led discussion about the Serpent Mound and Fort Ancient Indians, assign students the **National Geographic Cover: Serpent Mound** and distribute the **Rubric**. Encourage students to use the facts and pictures on the board to help create their cover.
3. If needed, have a few copies of *National Geographic* around for students to see what the magazine cover looks like and how it's designed and organized.

Serpent Mound: Acrostic Poem

1. Students should have already viewed the video *Serpent Mound*.
2. Review an acrostic poem with students. If you have not used an acrostic poem in your classroom, complete a poem as a class with a simple term that all students would be able to describe.
3. Distribute the **Acrostic Poem: Serpent Mound** worksheet for students to complete.

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Answer Key

What I Learned

1. Peebles, Ohio
2. The mound was constructed around 1070 AD.
3. Bone tools as farming implements (hoes, rakes) fish hooks, pottery, bow and arrow.
4. The mound was used as a giant calendar to mark the seasons.
5. The mound was constructed out of three layers of stone and soil which was carried in baskets and dumped in place. The mound was covered in grass or left barren.
6. Frederick Ward Putnam was from Harvard University and was the first to excavate the site in the late 19th century. He is also known as the "father of modern archaeology."

What Could It Be?

1. size: 1-2 inches in height; shape: u-shaped with a pointed end; special qualities: pointy/sharp point
 2. Answers will vary, the artifact was used as a fish hook.
 3. This artifact is similar to a modern fish hook.
-
1. 2-3 inches in height; shaped like a fan or comb; has many pointed "teeth"
 2. This object may have been used as a hair comb; answers will vary, other answers are acceptable
 3. This object is similar to a modern hair comb
-
1. It is about 2-3 inches across; its round in shape; it has a hole in the middle of it
 2. Might have been used in a game; answers will vary; other answers are

acceptable. [note:] This object was used in a game in which the disc was rolled with a stick and goals were scored.

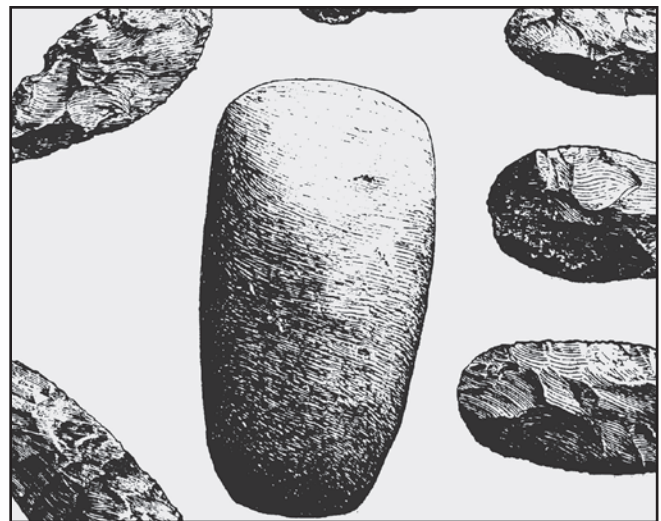
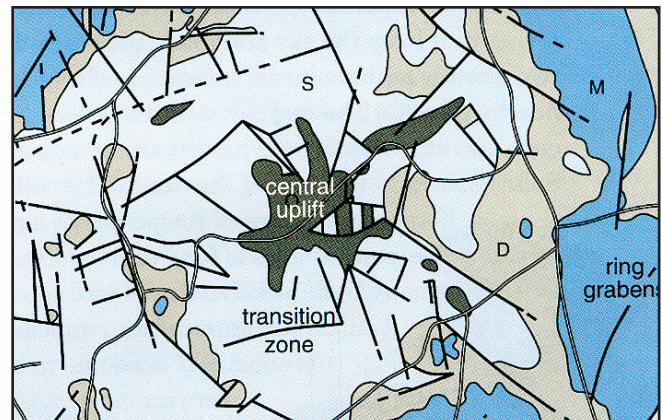
3. It is very similar to a hockey puck from a hockey game.

National Geographic: The Great Serpent Mound

Use the rubric and instructions to identify lesson requirements and to guide grading.

Serpent Mound: Acrostic Poem

Answers will vary depending on the student. Each phrase should incorporate historically accurate facts about the Serpent Mound and Fort Ancient culture.



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What I Learned

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Instructions: Read all of the questions in the **Find Out** column below. Fill in the correct answers in the **What I Learned** column while watching the *Our Ohio* video the *Serpent Mound*.

FIND OUT	WHAT I LEARNED
Where is Serpent Mound located?	
When was the Serpent Mound constructed?	
What kinds of tools did the Fort Ancient Indians use?	
What was the mound used for?	
How was the serpent mound constructed?	
Who was Frederick Ward Putnam?	

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What Could It Be?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Instructions: Look carefully at the Fort Ancient artifact below to answer the questions that follow.



1. Describe what the artifact looks like. List the size it appears to be, the shape of the object, and what it might be made from. Also write down anything special, unusual, or interesting about the artifact.

size: _____

shape: (for example: flat, straight, round, curvy) _____

special qualities: _____

2. How might this object have been used?

3. Can you think of any things that we use today that remind you of this artifact?

4. What do you think this object is?

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What Could It Be?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Instructions: Look carefully at the Fort Ancient artifact below to answer the questions that follow.



1. Describe what the artifact looks like. List the size it appears to be, the shape of the object, and what it might be made from. Also write down anything special, unusual, or interesting about the artifact.

size: _____

shape: (for example: flat, straight, round, curvy) _____

special qualities: _____

2. How might this object have been used?

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What Could It Be?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Instructions: Look carefully at the Fort Ancient artifact below to answer the questions that follow.



1. Describe what the artifact looks like. List the size it appears to be, the shape of the object, and what it might be made from. Also write down anything special, unusual, or interesting about the artifact.

size: _____

shape: (for example: flat, straight, round, curvy) _____

special qualities: _____

2. How might this object have been used? (hint: hockey)

3. Can you think of any things that we use today that remind you of this artifact?

4. What do you think this object is?

National Geographic Cover: Serpent Mound

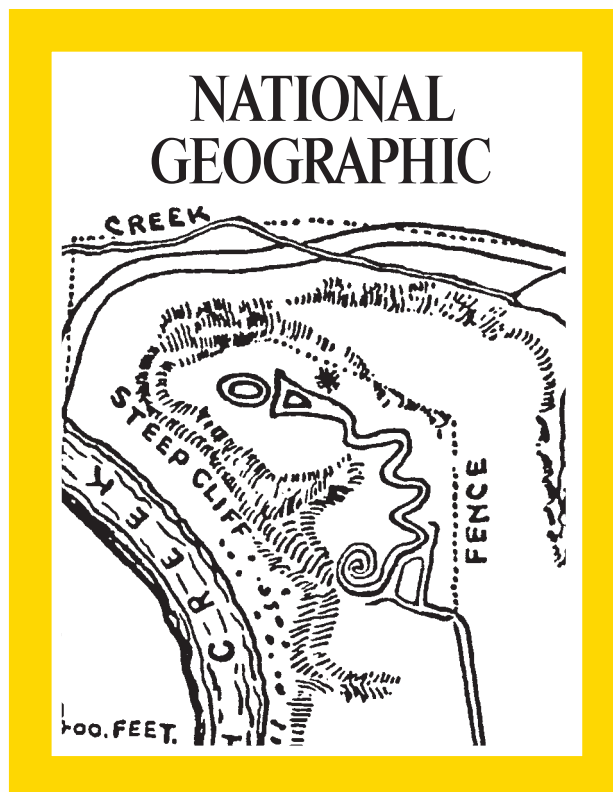
NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Create a “mock” cover for *National Geographic*. The feature story for the magazine will be the Serpent Mound and it’s your job to create a clever, informative and historically accurate cover for the magazine.

COVER REQUIREMENTS

1. *National Geographic* title clearly displayed.
2. An illustration of the Serpent Mound.
3. Three inside article titles with subheadings, e.g. “Adena or Fort Ancient? Who do you think *really* built the mound?”
4. Two illustrations of artifacts from the Fort Ancient Indians. Each artifact must have a caption describing its purpose.



Sample Cover

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National Geographic Cover: Serpent Mound Rubric

Category	4	3	2	1
Serpent Mound Illustration	The entire Serpent Mound is neatly illustrated on the cover.	The entire Serpent Mound is illustrated on the cover.	A partial illustration of the Serpent Mound appears neatly on the cover.	A partial illustration of the Serpent Mound is on the cover.
Article Titles	There are three article titles with subheadings. The article titles are creative.	There are three article titles with subheadings.	There are two article titles with subheadings. The article titles are creative.	There is one article title with a subheading.
Artifact Illustrations	There are two artifact illustrations with descriptive captions.	There are two artifact illustrations.	There is one artifact illustration with a descriptive caption.	There is one artifact illustration.
Attractiveness	<i>National Geographic</i> Title is clearly and neatly displayed. The cover attracts the reader's attention. It is colorful and organized.	<i>National Geographic</i> Title is clearly and neatly displayed. The cover is colorful and organized, but lacks attention to detail.	<i>National Geographic</i> Title is displayed. The cover is organized, but lacks color and attention to detail.	<i>National Geographic</i> Title is displayed. The cover is colorful, but difficult to read.

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Acrostic Poem: Serpent Mound

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Create an acrostic poem for the term Serpent Mound. Each letter should contain a phrase that describes the history known (and speculated) about Serpent Mound. Use your textbook, *Our Ohio* video segment, Internet research or information provided by your teacher to complete the acrostic poem. An example has been provided to help you get started.

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Next to Adena and Fort Ancient burial mounds

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