

HORIZON'S HOMESCHOOL

PART 3: Archeology

LESSON

What is archeology?

Archeology (ark-ee-AH-luh-gee) is the study of ancient (old) cultures through material remains. Someone who studies archeology is an **archeologist**. Archeologists aim to explain the background and development of human culture through cultural remains (artifacts, inscriptions, and monuments).

What are cultural remains?

Cultural remains represent materials that were created during a certain historical period of time. They can include:

- **Artifacts:** objects made by humans, such as tools and art.
- **Inscriptions:** words, pictures, or symbols written or engraved into a surface, such as stone.
- **Monuments:** types of statues, buildings, or structures created to remember a person or event important to historic times or cultural heritage.



Inscription: Native American pictograph known as the "White Shaman" from a rock shelter in South Texas. Approximately 2,000 years old.

Monument: The Alamo – Site of the Battle of the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas in 1836.



Photo Credit: Jowdy Photography



Artifact: Projectile Point (dart) - Crafted as a weapon that was capable of being projected (thrown). Approximately 2,500 to 3,200 years old.

What kind of archeology is found locally?

People have lived in Central Texas for thousands of years. These early people stayed in small familial groups (usually consisting of a mom, dad, kids, and maybe a grandparent) and survived by moving from place to place to take advantage of the plants and animals at each location. Over thousands of years, groups repeatedly camping on the same landform often resulted in archeological sites with thick deposits of cultural material consisting of stone tools, projectile points, cooking stones, animal bones, and even human burials.

Most stone tools we find here in Texas are made of a rock called **chert**. Chert is a sedimentary rock made up of silica crystals. This silica comes from the fossilized bodies of **diatoms** (single-celled algae) and other sea creatures that are millions of years old!

In addition to chert, Native Americans used other rocks, like quartzite, hematite, and sandstone, to make tools.

Hematite: A mineral used for pigment (color) for inscriptions (writing, art, symbols).



Sandstone: Used to grind food.



Quartzite: Used as hammers to make other tools.



Why is archeology important?

Archeology provides a way to learn about our past. People want to understand and reflect on how humans came to be. Through archeology, we have learned that people have lived in the Americas for over 13,000 years! The earliest people known to have lived in the Americas are known as the Clovis people. While Clovis people used all kinds of resources to survive, they are probably best known for hunting large animals (megafauna) using large, fluted spear points. Later Native American groups have lived in the Americas for thousands of years and make up most of the archeological sites that archeologists find. However, even more recent sites like the Alamo or maybe even an old farmhouse and barn you see while driving down the road are also historic archeological sites. Documenting archeological sites of all ages helps us to understand how humans settled areas, lived off the available resources, and interacted with neighboring groups.

Fun Fact: A common misunderstanding about archeologists is that they dig up dinosaur bones. That is *incorrect*. A **paleontologist** (pey-lee-uhn-tol-uh-jist) digs up dinosaur bones!



How is Horizon Environmental involved?

The archeologists who work at Horizon go out to examine project sites to determine if significant cultural deposits are present. If significant cultural deposits are observed, the archeologists may excavate (dig up) the site by removing layers of the soil carefully and studying the artifacts that they find within each layer. Horizon works with land developers to try to protect and preserve archeological sites as much as possible so that we can learn from our past and share it with future generations.

How can *you* get involved?

You can spend the day visiting the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin, which has many Texas archeological displays. Additionally, every October, various museums and institutions across Texas host events for Texas Archeology Month. It's an opportunity for Texans to learn the depth and richness of their state's heritage and its historical significance, while celebrating the spirit of discovering Texas's past.

**How much did *you* learn? Take the quiz to see!
Check out the "color your own projectile point" activity!**

To learn more about what we do at Horizon, please visit [our Services page](#). Thanks for joining us!