

Test your skill – Terminology of Archaeology

Research the following and see if you can explain each of these words commonly used in the field of Archaeology:

Absolute Dating: To determine the age of an excavated object by referring to a specific date scale.

Anthropology Study of humans, concentrating on culture.

Archaeology Study of ancient things left by people of past civilisations

Artifact a man made item, tool or implement that can be found by archaeologists and studied to learn about the past

AD Anno Domini (in the year of the Lord) dates after the birth of Christ

BC dates before the birth of Christ

Bronze Age the time period in which bronze was the predominant material used in tools (can vary from place to place).

Cartouche an oval outline and base around hieroglyphs indicating a royal name. Comes from the French word for cartridge (gun cartridge) given during Napoleons occupation of Egypt.

Civilisation a social and political organisation, identified with cities, a class system, writing and architecture.

Context a description of an artefacts deposit sediment or its location and association with surrounding features and other artefacts.

Copper Age the time period in which copper was the predominant material used in tools.

Cuneiform ancient writing system of Mesopotamia characterised by a wedge shaped writing format.

Ecofacts: Remains excluding artifacts that are organic or environmental in nature such as floral or faunal material as well as soil.

Faience a coloured paste/glaze made of crushed quartz used to cover ceramic items.

Feature an object within the dig site that is a part of the structure of the site.

Find individual artefact of significance

Findspot location of a find in three dimensions

Hellenistic time period of Greek culture after Alexander the Great (356-323BC)

Hieroglyph Egyptian picture writing considered sacred, in which the pictures represented objects and sounds

Historic Period the period after the introduction of writing and literate cultures.

Inscription writing done with a reed pen on clay or chisel on stone

In Situ In place. A location of objects original find position.

Iron Age the time period in which Iron was the predominant material used in tools.

Levant lands next to the Eastern Mediterranean

Lintel horizontal support piece above a door of stone, wood or metal.

Lithic a portable stone implement that is man made

Near East the area of Southwest Asia being Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan along with some others.

Ostraca a piece of broken pottery on which writing has been made (origin = Greece)

Pediment The triangular end section to the roof of a Greek temple.

Potsherd a piece of broken pottery (sometimes called *sherd*)

Radiocarbon dating a dating method based on the remaining radiocarbon left in all organic material.

Relative dating a dating system not based on the chronological calendar, such as dating an object as earlier or later than another time frame.

Relief a carved stone slab in a temple or tomb

Seal an official mark or impression made on a document.

Stela a commemorative upright stone slab on which a carved inscription is placed.

Stratigraphy the interpretation of the vertical layering of an archaeological site allowing the archaeologist to date objects in layers.

Tablet a flat piece of clay on which cuneiform writing is made.

Tell a mound made from the accumulated debris of collapsed ancient settlements built one on top of another.

Typology the classification of artefacts into groups or types, based on their sharing similar characteristics or attributes.

Ziggurat an ancient Mesopotamian pyramid shaped structure composed of brick or stone.