

## CAHOKIA - CULTURE

We wonder how these people lived. Where did they sleep? What did they eat? What languages did they speak? Did they play music and dance? Did the children play games? How did they worship?

All these questions are important to anthropologists. Anthropologists are people who think about the culture people create and live within. (Remember the question, "What makes a community?")

We can answer some of those questions about the Cahokians but not others. For instance, we don't really know what language they spoke since we find no evidence of it being written down.

But evidence does help us answer other questions. For example, we're pretty sure Monks Mound was made, like the great cathedrals of Europe and the pyramids in Africa, as part of the religion of the Cahokian people. Some anthropologists even think that human sacrifices were performed there. Those sacrifices might have been the reason their neighbors were angry enough that the Cahokians felt the need to build the wall around their city.

When we search through their trash, we find fish and deer bones, seeds, and pots in which to cook cornmeal mush. These hints offer about how they

cooked and what people ate.

Big stones shaped with flat blades were probably used to dig up the dirt to plant seeds. So when we find those we can guess that many of the people were farmers.

We also guess that some of the Cahokians were considered big shots and others were not. How do we know that? A few of the graves have lots and lots of stuff buried with the body. Most graves don't. So we can guess that there were rich, important Cahokians and many others who were in the lower classes.

What about the games?



(<http://www.kincaidmounds.com/history.htm>)

The carved stone you see in the top picture is now called a chunky stone. You can see many chunky stones in the burial site in the picture below



(<http://lithiccastinglab.com/gallery-pages/2001augustmound72page2.htm>)

If many chunky stones were buried with an important person, you can guess that the chunky stones were important.

But what were they used for?

Anthropologists guess that they were part of a game. Here's what they did: someone would roll the stone hard on flat ground. Two players would try to guess where the stone would stop and throw spears at that spot. The one whose spear was closest to where the chunky stone stopped rolling was the winner.

What games do we have in which we throw things? What games do we

have in which we roll things? Do we have any games in which we both roll and throw things? How would you create a game like chunky to play on the playground? [I'm guessing that if you try this, you'll have to do it without making spears :

We didn't even mention art yet, but art is a big part of anyone's culture. How would you investigate Cahokian art? What guesses could you make about the Cahokian people by looking at the art they made and enjoyed? Turn to a partner and make a list about what we could learn by looking at the artwork of the Cahokian people.

What can we learn by looking at Cahokian artwork?

- the use of artwork

E- what kind of gods they worshipped

- what was important to them

- what they looked like (portraits)

- how they played

- pictures of how they did work

- how the religion worked

- what they painted with (what materials they used)

Important to Cahokian culture:

- houses (where they lived) (Gracie, Nate, Justin)
- how they worshipped (Charlie, Shyanne, Jaylen)
- language
- food
- how they played (Tyler, Haileigh, Samantha)
- hunting, art, music, exercise (Dylan, Ronnie, Sydney)
- how they learned
- leader, coleader, chief (how did they determine this? strength?) (Lydia, Caleb, Kevin)
- trading (no money) (Will B, Hanna, Alex)
- human sacrifice? (Adam, Will H, Malachi)
- built a wall
- mounds (why did they build these mounds if they didn't live in them?) (Kelsey, Luke, Maya, Kevin)