

Read the following article about attempts to understand a vanished people. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The numbers are found on the left side of the paragraphs.

The Anasazi

'The Ancient Ones'

by Rick Bell

- 1 In the high desert country of the American Southwest are traces of a prehistoric civilization created by the Anasazi. These early American Indians left no written records to document their society, only a legacy of beautifully decorated ceramics, elaborate architecture in the cliffs and canyons, and haunting petroglyphs (figures pecked or cut into rock) and pictographs (figures painted on rock). What we know about the Anasazi depends solely on our interpretation of their artifacts. We do not even know what they called themselves. Anasazi is a Navajo word meaning "the ancient ones" or "the ancestors of our enemies."
- 2 Around 1500 B.C., prehistoric hunters began settling in the American Southwest. They grew corn and squash to supplement the food they found by hunting and foraging. From 1500 B.C. to around A.D. 750, these people developed an increasingly complex society and moved from cave dwellings to pit houses made of sticks and mud. They cultivated beans and began to manufacture ceramic pottery decorated with black-and-white geometric designs. Archaeologists call this early era the Basketmaker period because the Anasazi also produced beautiful finger-woven containers.
- 3 For the next six hundred years, the Anasazi civilization blossomed into its highest level of sophistication. The time from 750 to 900 is called the Pueblo I period. During this time, the Anasazi built some large villages using crude masonry construction. Kivas, underground or partly underground rooms, began to appear in many communities. These rooms are believed to have been used as ceremonial centers and possibly as living spaces. During the Pueblo I period, pottery was primarily functional gray ware, with some red or black-and-white decorations.
- 4 The Pueblo II period lasted from 900 to 1150. This was the era of greatest development in the Chaco Canyon region. The Anasazi erected fine, large villages and designed a regular road system radiating out from the main communities. Their pottery decorations also became more elaborate. The Anasazi civilization reached its peak in the Chaco Canyon community, with its complex religious centers and regional networks.
- 5 The Pueblo III period, lasting from 1150 to 1300, marked the beginning of a decline in the Anasazi civilization. In this period, the people built large pueblos like those seen today in Mesa Verde National Park. They created a great deal of black-on-white pottery, which

they used in both everyday life and special ceremonies. The great mystery of the Anasazi people occurred at the end of this period. The people abandoned a large portion of their homeland and disappeared from sight.

- 6 This abandonment has intrigued scholars for more than a hundred years. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Anasazi changed residences frequently, often settling in an area for fifty to one hundred years, moving on, and then returning to the site in later years. By 1300, something disrupted this pattern, for the Anasazi left the area and never returned.
- 7 Many theories have been proposed to explain the Anasazi's permanent abandonment of the Four Corners region of the Southwest. According to one theory, climatic changes resulted in a long-term drought. Although the Anasazi had experienced periods of drought before, they usually left the area and returned at a later date when weather conditions improved. This time, though, their population had grown so large that moving on may not have saved them from the drought. In addition, areas to the south and west of the Anasazi homeland were developing into population centers. Pueblo communities were growing in the Rio Grande valley, the upper Little Colorado River area, and the Mogollon Rim. There is some evidence of new religious ideologies and rituals developing in these areas, and these might have been a powerful attraction for people seeking answers to their deteriorating environment. Whatever the reason for the Anasazi's disappearance, today we have only limited information about their way of life.

The Anasazi Today

- 8 When the Anasazi abandoned their communities in the late 1200s, they did not disappear completely. They became the ancestors of today's Pueblo Indians. Many of the present-day Pueblo people of the Rio Grande valley, as well as the Hopi and Zuni, draw much of their cultural and biological heritage from the ancient Anasazi. Yet it is probably incorrect to draw a direct line of descent from the Anasazi, as elements of the Mogollon cultures, developed by the Anasazi's neighbors to the south, also are seen in today's Pueblo people.
- 9 Many contemporary Pueblo communities reflect the enduring traditions and rituals of the Anasazi. We also see traces of the Anasazi past in the ceramics, jewelry, baskets, and architecture of Pueblo artists and craftspeople. Construction styles, building materials, and decorative motifs more than a thousand years old remain vital elements of southwestern design.

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