

ARCHAEOLOGY WITH DR SARAH KURNICK

TALKING POINTS

KNOWLEDGE

1. What defines the Maya Classic and Postclassic periods?
2. How are excavations conducted at Punta Laguna?
3. What do the obsidian and shell artefacts found at Punta Laguna tell archaeologists about the site?

COMPREHENSION

4. How can archaeology be used either to justify or combat inequality?
5. Why is the modern community of Punta Laguna essential for the Punta Laguna Archaeology Project?
6. And how are they benefitting from the project?

APPLICATION

7. Community archaeology engages non-specialists in a field that requires formal training and education. What other fields could benefit from involving local communities?

EVALUATION

8. Do you think there are objective truths about the past? Why, or why not?
9. Should anyone be free to practise archaeology, or do we need qualifications and regulations to make sure heritage is handled professionally and with care?

CREATIVITY

10. What monument would you build to commemorate your community's history or values?
11. Imagine you are an archaeologist planning your next dig. Where are you going, what do you want to discover and how will you involve local communities in your research?
12. "Just imagine how our understanding of history might change if it was told by the marginalised rather than the powerful." What do you think the world would look like today, if history was written by those who are marginalised and oppressed?

ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO AT HOME OR IN THE CLASSROOM

1. The transition between the Maya Classic and Postclassic periods has often been described as a 'collapse', when the more complex and more hierarchical society transitioned to a less complex way of life. Research the Classic and Postclassic periods and create a short presentation explaining their similarities and differences to your classmates. Do you agree that the transition between these periods represents a collapse?
2. In recent years, statues and monuments to historical figures across the US have been defaced and toppled in response to modern racial inequality. Read this article Sarah wrote for *The Conversation* about how this is an ancient method of redefining the past: www.theconversation.com/ancient-cancel-cultures-the-defacement-of-statues-in-america-replicates-a-tradition-going-back-millennia-142029

Then, organise a class debate about the role of statues and monuments. Considering ancient and modern examples, discuss whether and how significant people should be remembered and celebrated.

MORE RESOURCES

- Learn more about Punta Laguna: www.puntalagunamx.com
- Watch Sarah's TED talk about the dangers of pseudo-archaeology, 'Aliens built the pyramids and other absurdities of pseudo-archaeology': www.ted.com/speakers/sarah_kurnick
- *Sapiens* is an online magazine about anthropology and archaeology, full of interesting articles: www.sapiens.org

HEAD TO SARAH'S FUTURUM WEBPAGE FOR A SPANISH VERSION OF HER ARTICLE AND ACTIVITY SHEET:

www.futurumcareers.com/what-does-the-past-mean-to-people-today