Encounters with the Americas (3rd Floor)

Welcome to Mesoamerica! Where is Mesoamerica? Look at the map below to find out. Find a map of Mesoamerica in this gallery. The gallery map shows the natural resources available to people living in this area. Now explore the gallery and look for ways these resources have been used by the Ancient Maya, the Aztecs, and the people of Mesoamerica and South America today. Write down one use for each resource listed below:

Obsidian: ________________________________  Spondylus: ________________________________
Jade/greensone: _________________________  Brightly colored feathers: ________________

Differences:

Similarities:

Pacific Islands (4th Floor)

Can you tell what kinds of food the many peoples in the Pacific Islands and Australia relied upon?

What objects can you find that provide clues? List at least three objects you see that could be used to catch or prepare food, and draw your favorite below:

This gallery shows cloth made of different materials available on the Pacific islands. What are the cloths on the back wall made of (hint: look at the label on top of the display case)?

Hall of the North American Indian (1st Floor)

Find the house diorama in the Northeast Region. Imagine yourself wearing the clothes you see or living in the houses and eating the food shown. Go to the house dioramas in the Plains Region. Write down some similarities and differences between the regional dioramas. Keep in mind the different climates and resources available in both places.

Did you know? The ancient Aztecs used cacao as a form of currency—in fact, as recently as the mid-19th century these beans were used as money in some parts of Mesoamerica. Very wealthy people who drank a special cacao drink could literally say they were “drinking” their money!
Minerals, Gems, & Meteorites

The minerals and gems in this room are not just pretty to look at—they can also be very useful! People around the world use the minerals in their area, and trade to get minerals from far away.

Look for the following minerals in cases 55, 33, and 7, then match each one up with its uses:

- Halite
- Turquoise
- Mica

This mineral has been used in jewelry and other decorations by civilizations throughout the world. According to the Apache, it is good luck and gives a hunter perfect aim.

This “sheet silicate” looks like glass but is more resistant to heat, so it’s used as windows for stoves. In powdered form, it is sometimes added to toothpaste, makeup, or paint to make them shiny.

You probably don’t think twice about sprinkling this mineral on your fries, but it has not always been so easy to get. Because salt keeps food from going bad, people have traded it—and even fought wars over it—for centuries.

Animals

In the past, native peoples living in the Plains Region relied on bison for food, clothing, tools, and shelter. Bison hides were used for tipi walls and as canvases for drawing or recording important events. Can you think of any animals you rely on every day? Can you find them in these galleries?

People adapt to different environments by making different clothes, living in different kinds of houses, eating different foods, and making different kinds of tools. Animals adapt in other ways. Find the case with four different types of bears in the Holarctic Vertebrates gallery.

The polar bear is the only bear with white fur. Why is its fur white? (Hint: think about where it lives.)

Underneath its fur, the polar bear has black skin. Why is its skin black? (Hint: think about how hot your driveway gets in the sun.)

Today, you have encountered different peoples who have made the most of the resources and climate where they live. You are no longer limited by the natural resources in your area. Thanks to global travel and communication, you can use resources from around the world!

Can you think of two natural resources you learned about today that you also use? Do you use these resources for the same purpose, or for something different? How do you use them?

Write down a question you have, and find the answer by asking a teacher or parent, or by looking it up in a book or on the web:

People & Places: The Environment & Us

Welcome to the Peabody Museum! Today you will be an anthropologist, which means you’ll be studying people. Because we can’t study the people themselves, we’re going to look at the objects they make or use, which are called artifacts. Pay close attention to the ways people interact with their environment and use the natural resources available to them.

Igloos to Adobe Gallery Hunt

People & Places:

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“Inuit Caribou Hunt”—look inside to learn more about how people use their natural resources!

Just like the scientists who work behind the closed doors of this museum, you’ll want to write down what you learn. You can explore the museum in any order you want, and you can pick and choose which parts of this hunt you want to do. Remember to respect other adventurers: move slowly and quietly.