

Archaeology: From Map to Museum

VR1: Myths and Moundbuilders

Directions: You will review the video "Myths and Moundbuilders" (Odyssey, 1988) and will produce notes relevant to three primary issues discussed in the video. You should be prepared to include a complete set of notes pertaining to the video in your final class portfolio, and your responses to the following three questions should be posted to the Discussion Forum before the beginning of the next class period.

Questions: Please provide your response to the following three questions. Your response should reflect your understanding of the three principle issues based on class discussion and video-related notes produced during the viewing.

1. Identify the primary "myths" of archaeology and the Moundbuilders controversy as noted in the video commentary. Having first identified the principal myths noted, please discuss what you feel serves to explain the origins of the myths in question?
2. How did the use of a systematic and more or less unbiased approach to the Moundbuilders controversy ultimately bring initial closure to the controversy?
3. What evidence did Cyrus Thomas use to support his view that not all mounds were built by the same American Indian tribes or cultures?
4. What value would you ascribe to the "mound reconstruction" experiment undertaken by the archaeologists portrayed in the video? Why was the experiment important, and what did the experiment seek to demonstrate?
5. Based on what you observed, and indicated in your notes, what is "salvage archaeology" and how is it beneficial (and or destructive) to the interpretation of the prehistory of North America?
6. Reflect on the value and relative significance of the so-called "salvage archaeology" approach portrayed in the video. Please bear in mind that several of the archaeology projects depicted in the video were undertaken so as to "salvage," recover, or mitigate any adverse cultural impact posed to those archaeological sites under threat of destruction by development or public works projects.
7. Many Native Americans take issue with the nature and practice of prehistoric research. What objections were raised in this program? Do you know of any other related arguments? What arguments (pro and con) might accrue if archaeologists wished to excavate your ancestral home or family cemetery?
8. What do you believe underlies that pattern of reasoning that sought to deny the American Indian role in the construction of the Mound Builder civilization?