

Digging for Clues

How archaeologists carefully recover evidence at an important Virginia Indian place.

VS.2.a “describing how archaeologists have recovered artifacts from important places in the history of Indigenous people including, but not limited to Werowocomoco;”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline every action archaeologists take to recover or care for evidence, and circle each artifact named. Your marks will show how careful work protects clues from the past.

Careful Work at Werowocomoco

- ① Werowocomoco was an important village and political center for Powhatan people. It stood along the York River in what is now Gloucester County, Virginia. In the early 1600s, Powhatan, the leader of a group of Algonquian-speaking Virginia Indian communities, lived there. Today, archaeologists study this place carefully because the ground can hold evidence of people’s daily lives.
- ② Before digging, archaeologists survey the land and choose small places to test. At Werowocomoco, they dig measured test pits instead of turning over the whole site. They remove soil in careful layers, sift it through screens, and record where each find comes from. These steps help them recover tiny pieces without losing information about the layer and location.
- ③ Archaeologists have recovered pottery fragments, stone tools, and pieces of copper at Werowocomoco. A broken pot piece may show how people made or used containers, while a tool may show work people did. Archaeologists do not simply collect objects. They label, measure, and protect artifacts, then compare their findings with knowledge shared by Virginia Indian tribes and historical sources.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What did archaeologists do before they began digging?

2 How did measured test pits help archaeologists avoid disturbing the whole site?

3 After removing soil, name two steps archaeologists used to recover artifacts carefully.

4 Why did archaeologists record an artifact's layer and location?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine archaeologists are studying another important Virginia Indian place. Write three sentences explaining how they would carefully recover an artifact without losing information about it.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline every action archaeologists take to recover or care for evidence, and circle each artifact named. Your marks will show how careful work protects clues from the past. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did archaeologists do before they began digging?	They surveyed the land and chose small places to test.
2	How did measured test pits help archaeologists avoid disturbing the whole site?	They dug only small, measured areas instead of turning over the entire site.
3	After removing soil, name two steps archaeologists used to recover artifacts carefully.	They sifted soil through screens and recorded where each find came from. Accept removing soil in layers as another step.
4	Why did archaeologists record an artifact's layer and location?	Recording the layer and location kept important information about where the artifact was found.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At another important Virginia Indian place, archaeologists would survey the land and dig small test pits. They would remove soil in layers and sift each layer through a screen. They would record, label, and protect every artifact so its location is not lost.

Accept equivalent descriptions of surveying, using small test pits, digging in layers, sifting soil, recording locations, and protecting artifacts. For the open response, look for three sentences that explain careful recovery and include at least two accurate archaeological steps.