Greatest Archaeological Discovery: Pompeii

How and why is the process of archaeology important in the study of ancient world history?

Archaeology is important in the study of ancient world history because the discoveries found through the process of archaeology serve as a catalyst in furthering our knowledge of past civilizations and geography. The more we uncover about our past, the clearer our understanding of the past becomes. We can then implement this knowledge into our current sciences to further the understanding of ourselves or learn from them as mistakes not to repeat. It is possible to use this extensive knowledge of our past to build a greater future.

Based on the archaeological discovery that you selected, what excavation procedures were used (tools, techniques, length of excavation, etc.)?

Pompeii was first discovered in 1709 by Domenico Fontana, however, excavation of the site did not begin until 1738. Due to the year of the excavation, modern tools (e.g excavation machines) would not be possible. Instead, tools such as shovels, wheelbarrows, bags (not plastic, as plastic baggies were not invented yet) and brushes might have been used. More organized tools such as string and stakes might have been used later on but not at first, as early digging of the site was said to be “quite haphazard and irresponsible” (Jashemski 1).

What were the major conclusions, historical importance or impact of findings?

After thorough excavation and research, archaeologists came to the conclusion that during a summer morning in the year 79 A.D, a volcano currently known as “Mount Vesuvius” erupted and buried those in the nearby city of Pompeii in ash. Around 2,000 out of the estimated 20,000 inhabitants were killed. Scientists were easily able to date and research the remains of the city, as everything was miraculously preserved under multiple layers of ash.

Why was this discovery significant to the history of its specific civilisation?

This discovery was significant to its civilization because of the amount of knowledge that scientists were able to gain from just one archaeological project. Due to the remains being preserved under the ash so well, scientists were able to learn more about the Roman civilization from Pompeii than from any other archaeological find.

How does this specific archaeological discovery meet the definition of legacy and the importance of learning about the past?

The findings of Pompeii during the mid 18th century played an integral part in kick-starting the modern science that we know today as archaeology. Before Pompeii, it was very rare for huge excavations to take place in hopes of finding artefacts of the past, however, after the findings of Pompeii, public interest in artefacts began to peak. Scientists call Pompeii “A place that keeps on giving”, as even in our current times new discoveries are being found in Pompeii, such as graffiti and mosaics preserved on the walls (Geddo 1).

Works Cited

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