



Ancient Lines in the Sand

Article

NAZCA, Peru (Achieve3000, January 3, 2020). One quality common to the greatest wonders of the ancient world is their magnificent conspicuousness. It's impossible to walk past the pyramids in Egypt, for example, or Stonehenge in Great Britain without noticing them. They're right in your face, commanding your attention. And then there are the Nazca Lines in southern Peru.

These ancient drawings don't rise before you on enormous slabs of stone. They're geoglyphs ("ground drawings") etched into the desert sands. And they're impossible to distinguish at close range: Some are as large as the Statue of Liberty and Empire State Building. There are hundreds of them, spread out over nearly 190 square miles (492 square kilometers). Indeed, the best way to see the geoglyphs is from the window of an airplane. That's how thousands of tourists view them annually.

Small wonder, then, that these big wonders went unnoticed for nearly 1,500 years. A Peruvian archaeologist happened upon them in 1927. But it took the introduction of commercial air travel in the 1930s to bring them to the forefront. And even then, nearly 150 geoglyphs weren't discovered for many years. That is, until 21st-century technology such as drones found them.

And therein lies some of the wonderment of the Nazca Lines: Why did a civilization that existed long before air travel create etchings best viewed from above? You might also ask why the geoglyphs were crafted in the first place and what they represent. Researchers certainly have been pondering these questions for about a century. But the answers remain largely a mystery.

So here's what we *do* know: Between approximately 500 BCE and 500 CE, the region's pre-Incan civilization created the geoglyphs. How? By selectively removing some of the dark, reddish surface rocks that cover the ground and exposing the lighter-colored desert sand underneath. Some scientists believe that the geoglyph designers first created scaled-down models to guide them. Others think the designers used ropes attached to wooden posts to maintain the lines' full-scale proportions and geometric precision.

The geoglyphs' astonishing longevity is due to the small amounts of rain, wind, and erosion in the region. But many of the lines have, understandably, experienced some fading over the years. Beyond this, the biggest threat to these ancient masterpieces is posed by human activity, whether by mining, illegal agriculture, or automobile accidents.

Many of the geoglyphs come from the natural world, including animals and plants. And then there are the geoglyphs that completely defy nature. One example is the strange humanoid figure uncovered in 2019, with its multiple sets of eyes, mouths, and appendages. Researchers note that such oddities suggest that the Nazca people had a taste for the magical.

So what purpose did the geoglyphs serve? The most recent research suggests that the geoglyphs figured into specific rituals for rain and crop fertility. Certain geoglyphs may have indicated where the rituals were being conducted. Others were more like signposts directing travelers to those ceremonial places.

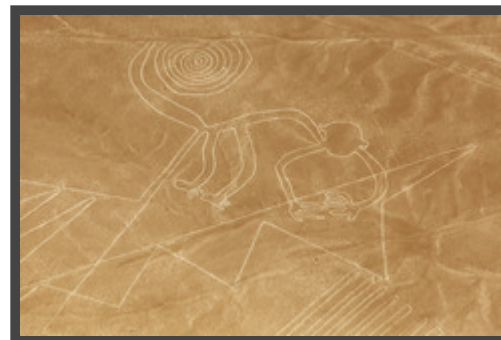


Photo credit: Daniel Prudek/Shutterstock

A monkey geoglyph is seen from above. It's one of the many ground drawings in southern Peru known as the Nazca Lines.

Then again, all of this is speculation. Only one thing remains clear: The Nazca civilization found a way to draw lines in the ever-shifting sands of time that would last forever.

Video credit: Achieve3000 from footage by maxuser/Creatas Video+/Getty Images

Dictionary

appendage (*noun*) a body part (such as an arm or a leg) connected to the main part of the body

longevity (*noun*) the length of time that something or someone lasts or continues

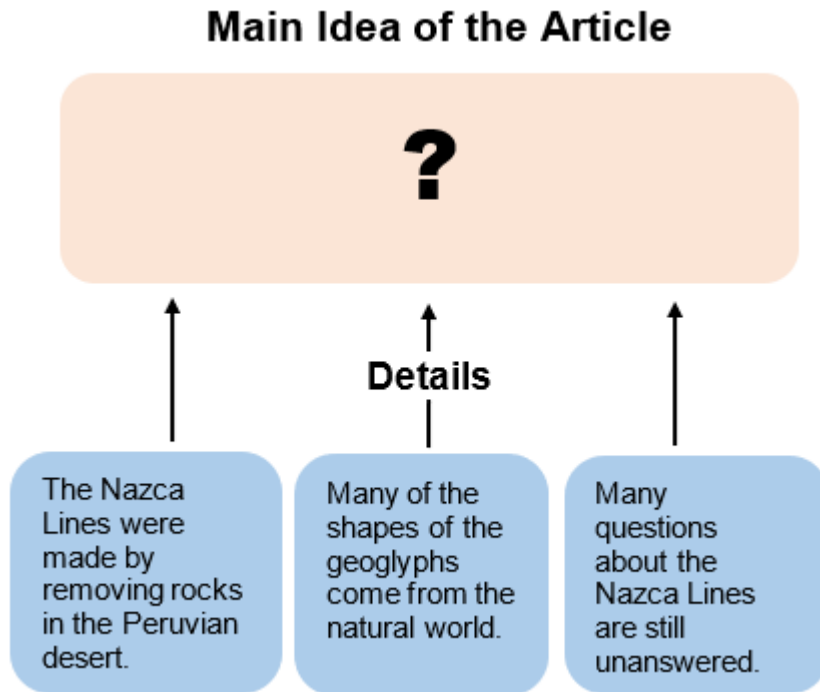
ritual (*noun*) an act or series of acts done in a particular situation and in the same way each time

speculation (*noun*) ideas or guesses about something that is not known

Activity

PART 1

Question 1



Based on the Article, which best replaces the question mark in the diagram above?

- (A) Interest in the Nazca Lines grew with the introduction of commercial aviation in the 1930s, but nearly 150 of the geoglyphs managed to avoid discovery until the 21st-century.
- (B) There are a number of possible explanations for the Nazca Lines, but the most recent research suggests that some of them were used in rituals for rain and crop fertility.
- (C) Some of the Nazca Lines found in Peru defy nature, such as a geoglyph discovered in 2019 that features multiple sets of eyes, mouths, and appendages.
- (D) The true meaning of the Nazca Lines, which are found in southern Peru and form images of plants, animals, and humanoids drawn on the desert floor, remains unknown to this day.

Question 2

Which of these is a statement of opinion?

- Ⓐ Some geoglyphs, which are impossible to distinguish at close range and cover an area of 190 square miles (492 square kilometers), are identifiable from the window of an airplane.
- Ⓑ Sometime between 500 BCE and 500 CE, the Nazca Lines were created by a pre-Incan civilization that removed dark red surface rocks to reveal lighter-colored sand below.
- Ⓒ The Nazca Lines obviously formed a kind of ancient agricultural calendar because the people who created them would not go to such trouble for anything but very practical reasons.
- Ⓓ The fact that the geoglyphs still remain visible on the desert floor to this day is mainly due to the small amount of rain, wind, and erosion in the region.

Question 3

The Article states:

So here's what we *do* know: Between approximately 500 BCE and 500 CE, the region's pre-Incan civilization created the geoglyphs. How? By selectively removing some of the dark, reddish surface rocks that cover the ground and exposing the lighter-colored desert sand underneath. Some scientists believe that the geoglyph designers first created scaled-down models to guide them. Others think the designers used ropes attached to wooden posts to maintain the lines' full-scale proportions and geometric precision.

Why did the author include this passage?

- Ⓐ To explain how a pre-Incan civilization was able to create images on the desert floor that are only distinguishable from a distance
- Ⓑ To point out the fact that the images formed by the Nazca Lines evolved greatly between the years 500 BCE and 500 CE
- Ⓒ To show that the civilization that made the Nazca Lines must have possessed technology at least as advanced as that of the Incan people
- Ⓓ To describe the most recent evidence that helps to explain what the mysterious lines in the Peruvian desert were actually used for

Question 4

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *speculation*?

- Ⓐ selection
- Ⓑ supposition
- Ⓒ superstition
- Ⓓ satisfaction

Question 5

The reader can tell from the Article that _____.

- Ⓐ some of the Nazca Lines point to the best places to grow crops in the dry region
- Ⓑ Peru's Nazca Lines remained completely forgotten until the introduction of commercial air travel
- Ⓒ Peru's Nazca Lines are as conspicuous as many of the wonders of the ancient world
- Ⓓ some of the Nazca Lines are now so faded that they are hard to see without modern technology

Question 6

According to the Article, which of these happened *last*?

This question asks about when events happened. It does not ask where in the Article the events appear. Reread the Article for clues, such as dates.

- Ⓐ A civilization created drawings in the desert sand by stripping away the top layer of rocks.
- Ⓑ A geoglyph of a human-like being with many eyes, mouths, and limbs was discovered.
- Ⓒ A Peruvian archaeologist discovered groups of lines drawn on the desert floor.
- Ⓓ A series of lines in the Peruvian desert became well-known after flights passed overhead.

Question 7

Read this passage from the Article:

Many of the geoglyphs come from the natural world, including animals and plants. And then there are the geoglyphs that completely *defy* nature. One example is the strange humanoid figure uncovered in 2019, with its multiple sets of eyes, mouths, and appendages.

In this passage, the word *defy* means _____.

- Ⓐ to make something better
- Ⓑ to represent something
- Ⓒ to go against something
- Ⓓ to include something

Question 8

Which passage from the Article best supports the idea that the Nazca Lines might have served more than one purpose?

- Ⓐ Many of the geoglyphs come from the natural world, including animals and plants. And then there are the geoglyphs that completely defy nature. One example is the strange humanoid figure uncovered in 2019, with its multiple sets of eyes, mouths, and appendages.
- Ⓑ Between approximately 500 BCE and 500 CE, the region's pre-Incan civilization created the geoglyphs. How? By selectively removing some of the dark, reddish surface rocks that cover the ground and exposing the lighter-colored desert sand underneath.
- Ⓒ Small wonder, then, that these big wonders went unnoticed for nearly 1,500 years. A Peruvian archaeologist happened upon them in 1927. But it took the introduction of commercial air travel in the 1930s to bring them to the forefront.
- Ⓓ The most recent research suggests that the geoglyphs figured into specific rituals for rain and crop fertility. Certain geoglyphs may have indicated where the rituals were being conducted. Others were more like signposts directing travelers to those ceremonial places.