



Ancient Lines in the Sand

Article

NAZCA, Peru (Achieve3000, January 3, 2020). The greatest wonders of the ancient world are generally hard to miss. It's impossible to walk past the pyramids in Egypt or Stonehenge in Great Britain, for example, without noticing them. They're right in your face, commanding your attention. But 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") in the desert sands. There are hundreds of them. Some are as large as the Statue of Liberty and Empire State Building. And they 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 each year.

Small wonder, then, that these big wonders went unnoticed for nearly 1,500 years. A Peruvian archaeologist happened upon some in 1927. But nearly 150 geoglyphs weren't discovered until many years later—it took 21st-century technology such as drones to find them.

And that's part of the wonderment of the Nazca Lines: Why did people who lived long before air travel create drawings that are best viewed from above? You might also ask why the geoglyphs were crafted in the first place. Researchers certainly have been trying to answer these questions for about a century.

So here's what we *do* know: The area's pre-Incan Nazca people created the geoglyphs. This was between 500 BCE and 500 CE. How did they create the ground drawings? By removing some of the dark, reddish surface rocks that covered the ground and showing the lighter-colored desert sand underneath. Some scientists believe that the geoglyph designers first created scaled-down models to guide them.

But why have the geoglyphs lasted so long? It's because there isn't much rain or wind in the area. Although many of the lines have, understandably, experienced some fading over the years. The biggest threat to these ancient masterpieces is posed by human activity like mining and unlawful agriculture.

Many of the geoglyphs show the natural world, such as animals and plants. And then there are the geoglyphs that aren't from nature. One example, uncovered in 2019, shows a strange creature with many sets of eyes and mouths. Researchers say this suggests 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 played a part in rituals for rain and crop fertility. Certain geoglyphs may have shown where the rituals were being held. Others may have been more like signposts directing travelers to those ceremonial places.

Then again, these are all guesses. Only one thing remains clear: The Nazca people found a way to draw lasting lines in the ever-shifting sands of time.

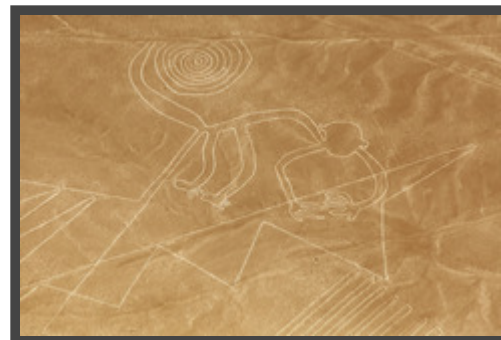


Photo credit: Daniel Prudek/Shutterstock

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

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

Dictionary

archaeology (*noun*) a science that deals with past human life and activities by studying the bones, tools, etc., of ancient people

drone (*noun*) a type of small aircraft that flies without a pilot

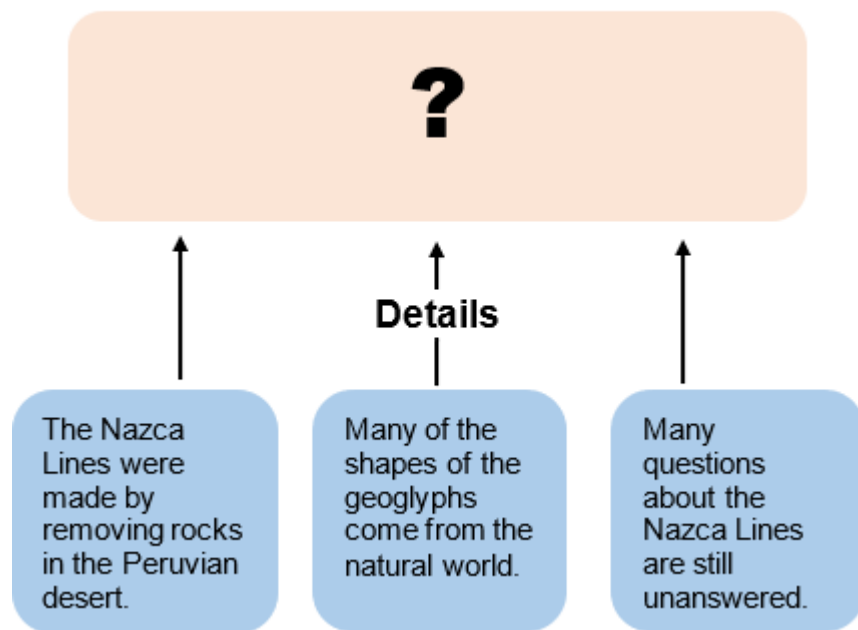
research (*verb*) to study (something) carefully

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

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

Main Idea of the Article

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

- (A) The true meaning of the Nazca Lines, which are found in southern Peru and show plants, animals, and a strange creature, remains unknown.
- (B) The most recent research into the meaning of the Nazca Lines suggests that the geoglyphs played a part in rituals for rain and crop fertility.
- (C) Some of the Nazca Lines show things that aren't seen in nature, such as a strange creature with many sets of eyes and mouths found in 2019.
- (D) A Peruvian archaeologist noticed the Nazca Lines in 1927, but nearly 150 of the geoglyphs escaped discovery until the 21st-century.

Question 2

Which of these is an opinion?

- (A) Researchers are wasting their time in trying to figure out why the Nazca Lines were made because it's impossible to know after so much time.
- (B) Some geoglyphs, which cover an area of 190 square miles (492 square kilometers), are recognizable from the window of an airplane.
- (C) Sometime between 500 BCE and 500 CE, the Nazca Lines were made by people who removed dark red surface rocks to show lighter-colored sand below.
- (D) The fact that the mysterious geoglyphs can still be seen today is mainly due to the small amount of rain and wind in southern Peru.

Question 3

The Article states:

So here's what we *do* know: The area's pre-Incan Nazca people created the geoglyphs. This was between 500 BCE and 500 CE. How did they create the ground drawings? By removing some of the dark, reddish surface rocks that covered the ground and showing the lighter-colored desert sand underneath. Some scientists believe that the geoglyph designers first created scaled-down models to guide them.

Why did the author include this passage?

- (A) To describe the most recent evidence that explains what the geoglyphs were used for
- (B) To say that it is easier to figure out what the lines show from high in the air than on the ground
- (C) To explain how the Nazca people created the geoglyphs by making lines on the desert floor
- (D) To point out the fact that the Nazca Lines changed a great deal between 500 BCE and 500 CE

Question 4

Which two words are the closest **synonyms**?

Only some of these words are used in the Article.

- (A) crafted and viewed
- (B) threat and danger
- (C) wonderment and attention
- (D) posed and transported

Question 5

The reader can tell from the Article that _____.

- (A) some of the Nazca Lines are so faded that they are hard to see even from the air
- (B) the Nazca Lines were created by removing the white sand from the desert floor
- (C) the Nazca Lines are as hard to miss as many of the wonders of the ancient world
- (D) some of the Nazca Lines point to the best places to grow crops in the dry area

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) A geoglyph of a strange creature with many sets of eyes and mouths was discovered.
- (B) The Nazca people created drawings in the desert sand by taking away the top layer of rocks.
- (C) A Peruvian archaeologist discovered groups of lines drawn on the desert floor.
- (D) Researchers began to ask why people created the mysterious geoglyphs in the first place.

Question 7

Read this passage from the Article:

And then there are the geoglyphs that aren't from nature. One example, uncovered in 2019, shows a strange creature with many sets of eyes and mouths. Researchers say this *suggests* that the Nazca people had a taste for the magical.

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

- Ⓐ to show that something is likely true
- Ⓑ to make something better
- Ⓒ to refuse to accept or admit something
- Ⓓ to end discussion on a topic

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 show the natural world, such as animals and plants. And then there are the geoglyphs that aren't from nature. One example, uncovered in 2019, shows a strange creature with many sets of eyes and mouths.
- Ⓑ Small wonder, then, that these big wonders went unnoticed for nearly 1,500 years. A Peruvian archaeologist happened upon some in 1927. But nearly 150 geoglyphs weren't discovered until many years later—it took 21st-century technology such as drones to find them.
- Ⓒ The area's pre-Incan Nazca people created the geoglyphs. This was between 500 BCE and 500 CE. How did they create the ground drawings? By removing some of the dark, reddish surface rocks that covered the ground and showing the lighter-colored desert sand underneath.
- Ⓓ The most recent research suggests that the geoglyphs played a part in rituals for rain and crop fertility. Certain geoglyphs may have shown where the rituals were being held. Others may have been more like signposts directing travelers to those ceremonial places.