

NHMU: The Fremont People

Summary

After learning about the Fremont people, students will make their own Fremont-Style pottery.

Main Core Tie

Social Studies - 4th Grade

[Standard 2 Objective 1](#)

Group Size

Individual

Materials

Clay

Paper Towels

Paper Cups

Water

- [Make Your Own Fremont-Style Pottery Instruction Sheet](#) (pdf)

Background for Teachers

Although a few Fremont sites are found in the surrounding states, Utah was the homeland of the Fremont people. The Fremont lived in Utah from 1,600 to 750 years ago and inhabited the area of Utah north of the Colorado River.

The Fremont adapted to many different locations in Utah. They lived near, and depended on, the marshes in Utah river valleys, in farming communities, and for part of the year in caves near the Great Salt Lake. Although the Fremont lived in different locations they all shared similar ways of life. All seem to have made and used gray pottery, built pithouses and either grew or traded for corn. The Fremont people made sturdy gray pottery in the shape of bowls and narrow-necked jars, some with loop handles. About 1,300 years ago, their pottery began to change and the people started to make pottery painted with beautiful black geometric designs on a white or gray background. Fremont pottery is similar to Anasazi types in decoration; however, each group added a different kind of material (such as sand or crushed rocks) to the clay to make it stronger.

Pithouse villages were common among the Fremont people. Usually villages were small, consisting of only four or five houses at a time. Pithouses were difficult to build; they were semi-subterranean and constructed of mud and plant materials. Most of these dwellings had only one or two rooms with a central hearth and a hole in the ceiling that acted as ventilation and a light source.

Although the Fremont grew corn, beans, and squash, archaeological evidence shows that many of them were still hunters and gathers of wild foods. The bones of deer, mountain sheep, bison, antelope and rabbits as well as charred wild seeds and plant parts are often found at Fremont sites. Insects, especially grasshoppers and crickets, were also eaten since they were nutritious and easy to gather and store.

Archaeologists do not find Fremont artifacts more recent than 750 years of age. The fate of the Fremont people is one of the major questions that archaeologists are trying to answer. Did the Fremont move from the area due to a widespread drought that made it impossible to farm? Did they leave because other groups moved into the area and forced them out? Or did the Fremont and these new arrivals marry and mix cultures, becoming unrecognizable in the archaeological record?

Instructional Procedures

Read the Background Information for Teachers to the students.
Have the class hypothesize about why the Fremont people vanished.
After a brief discussion have students make their own Fremont style pottery to bring to life this ancient culture.

Bibliography

This lesson plan was developed by the [Utah Museum of Natural History](#).

Authors

[Utah LessonPlans](#)