

# Who is Buried Where - and Why? Finding Cultural Universals with Ancient Egyptians and Texas Caddo Indians



**Subject and Grade** World Geography,  
High School (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grades)

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**Time duration** Two 50-minute class periods or one block period

**Overview** Cultural universals are the basic behaviors practiced by all cultures, regardless of location or era. Studying cultural universals helps us understand the customs of other societies both historically and in today's multicultural world. Humans burying and honoring their dead is one of these cultural universals. In this lesson, students will discover that burial practices of the Caddo Indians in east Texas around 1000 years ago and those of the ancient Egyptians over 4000 years ago, had a number of interesting differences and similarities.

**Objective** Students will define cultural universals and work with a partner to conduct guided research on burial practices of the Caddo Indians in Texas and the ancient Egyptians. After collecting data on the two cultures, they will use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast burial practices of the two

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cultures and use their research data to write a comparison/contrast essay.

**TEKS** *World Geography, High School*

(16), Culture. The student understands how the components of culture affect the way people live and shape the characteristics of regions

(16A), describe distinctive cultural patterns and landscapes associated with different places in Texas, the United States, and other regions of the world and how these patterns influenced the processes of innovation and diffusion

(16B), describe elements of culture, including language, religion, beliefs, institutions, and technologies

(17A), describe and compare patterns of culture such as language, religion, land use, education, and customs that make specific regions of the world distinctive

(21A), analyze and evaluate the validity and utility of multiple sources of geographic information such as primary and secondary sources, aerial photographs, and maps

(21B), generate summaries, generalizations, and thesis statements supported by evidence

(21C), use social studies terminology correctly

(21D), create original work using effective written communication skills, including proper citations and understanding and avoiding plagiarism

(23A), plan, organize, and complete a research project that involves asking geographic questions; acquiring, organizing, and analyzing information; answering questions; and communicating results

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**Materials**

- Exterior Image of Caddo Mound C Burial (included)
- Exterior Image of the Great Pyramid of Giza (included)
- Interior Image of Caddo Mound C Burial (included)
- Interior Image of the Great Pyramid of Giza (included)
- Lesson Vocabulary (included)
- Caddo Burial Notes and Egyptian Burial Notes Graphic Organizers (included)
- Teacher answer keys for Caddo and Egyptian (included)
- Who's Buried Where - And Why? Venn Diagram (included)
- Internet access and computers for research

**Activities  
and  
procedures***Day 1*

**Step 1:** Write the term cultural universal on the board or overhead and ask students if they can define it (to define this and other words in bold, see Lesson Vocabulary). Guide them to the correct answer and write it on the board. All societies, everywhere, have some form of religion, government, marriage, etc, all of which are cultural universals. Have students brainstorm more examples.

Note: See the following website for more on cultural universals:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/cultural-universals-in-sociology-definition-examples-quiz.html>

**Step 2:** Point out that one important cultural universal is honoring and burying our dead. Have students brainstorm reasons why human burials are so

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universally practiced. Why is so much attention paid to dead bodies? Have students give examples of how different cultures treat their dead, e.g., cremation, burial at sea, placement on platform, etc.

**Step 3:** Ask students if a society's elite individuals are given more attention when they die than ordinary individuals. Have students brainstorm ways important individuals are honored in death, e.g., state funerals for presidents and royalty, elaborate grave markers such as statues for important people, etc. Explain that they will be examining the burials of important individuals from the Texas Caddo Indian culture and the ancient Egyptian culture.

**Step 4:** Display the exterior image of Caddo Indian Burial Mound C in east Texas, followed by the exterior image of the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt. Point out that these specific burial sites were built for important individuals in different areas of the world during very different time periods and there was no way these Texan Indians and ancient Egyptians could have communicated and shared information about burial practices with each other. Yet these burial sites exhibit some of the same characteristics. Display interior images of Caddo Mound C and the Pyramid of Giza. Explain that students will be researching both these burial sites to discover how they are alike, i.e., what makes them cultural universals, and how they are different. They will then write a comparison/contrast essay using their research data.

**Step 5:** Have students choose a partner. Distribute one copy of the Caddo Burial Notes Graphic Organizer and one copy of the Egyptian Burial Notes Graphic

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Organizer to each set of partners. Explain that partners can divide their research, each student filling in one set of notes, or both students working on each set of notes simultaneously. The Egyptian Burial Notes Graphic Organizer requires independent research. Point out that the Caddo Burial Notes Graphic Organizer offers the following pertinent websites:

- [www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/ancestors/early.html](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/ancestors/early.html)
- [www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/fundamentals/graves.html](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/fundamentals/graves.html)
- [www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/mounds.html](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/mounds.html)
- <https://thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/caddo-mounds>

**Step 6:** Have students begin researching and filling in their graphic organizers. Note: The teacher may use the Burial Notes Answer Keys to help guide students toward appropriate answers. Correct answers will vary slightly, as they will come from different historical sources.

NOTE: Neither the Caddo Indian Burial Mound C in east Texas, nor the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt contained many pottery grave goods, although we know such items have been found in other Caddo and Egyptian burials. Pothunters, also known as grave robbers, often take artifacts from archeological sites without permission.

**Step 7:** When students have completed their research notes, display a copy of the Who's Buried Where- And Why? Venn Diagram on the board or overhead. Ask volunteers to offer one example of how the Caddo mound and the Egyptian pyramid are alike. Write that

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answer on the board and repeat the process for an example of how the two are different.

**Step 8:** Give each student a copy of the Who's Buried Where- And Why? Venn Diagram (one per each student). Have them fill in the examples of similar and different characteristics displayed on the board and then work with their partner to complete filling out their Venn diagrams, listing at least four examples of similar characteristics and four examples of different characteristics. Partners should share information and each partner should have identical information on his/her completed diagram.

### *Day 2*

**Step 1:** Re-display the definition of cultural universal on the board. Remind students that today they will be writing a comparison/contrast essay using the research data they gathered yesterday.

**Step 2:** Have students get with their partner and get out their completed Venn diagrams.

**Step 3:** Briefly go over the basics of writing a comparison/contrast essay.

**Step 4:** Refer again to the definition of cultural universal on the board and instruct students to discuss in their essays how the term is relevant to the burial practices of the Caddo Indians and ancient Egyptians.

**Step 5:** Have students write their essays, utilizing the information on their Venn diagrams. Partners may work

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separately or together on their essays, but each individual student must turn in a separate essay.

**Step 6:** Have students print out their completed essays or post them on a document sharing website and turn them in for grading.

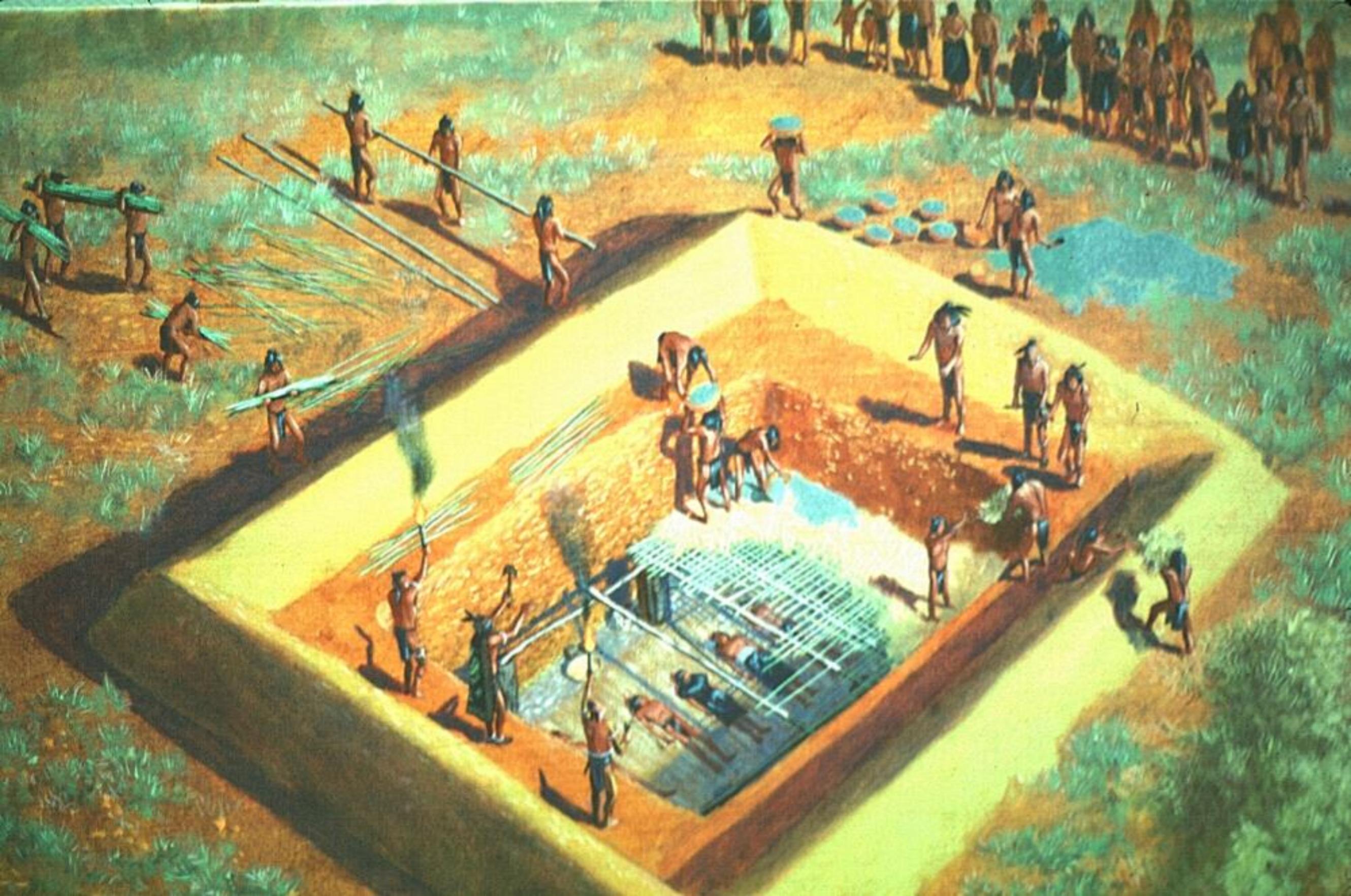
**Closure:** In today's world, we meet and interact with people from many different world cultures. Understanding cultural universals helps us identify with other cultures, both regarding their histories and current everyday lives. Investigating rituals and practices surrounding death reveals much about two different groups culture, history, and spiritual beliefs.

**Extension Activities** Discuss with students how today's American burial rituals compare to those of the Caddo Indians and Egyptians.

**Image Credits**

- Exterior Image of Caddo Mound C Burial: Courtesy of Texas Historical Commission
- Exterior Image of Great Pyramid of Giza: Wikipedia Commons
- Interior Image of Caddo Mound C Burial: Painting by Nola Davis, courtesy of Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.
- Interior Image of Great Pyramid of Giza: Wikipedia Commons





# GREAT PYRAMID AT GIZA





# Who's Buried Where - And Why? Venn Diagram

Directions: List at least 4 ways the two burials are the same and 4 ways they are different.

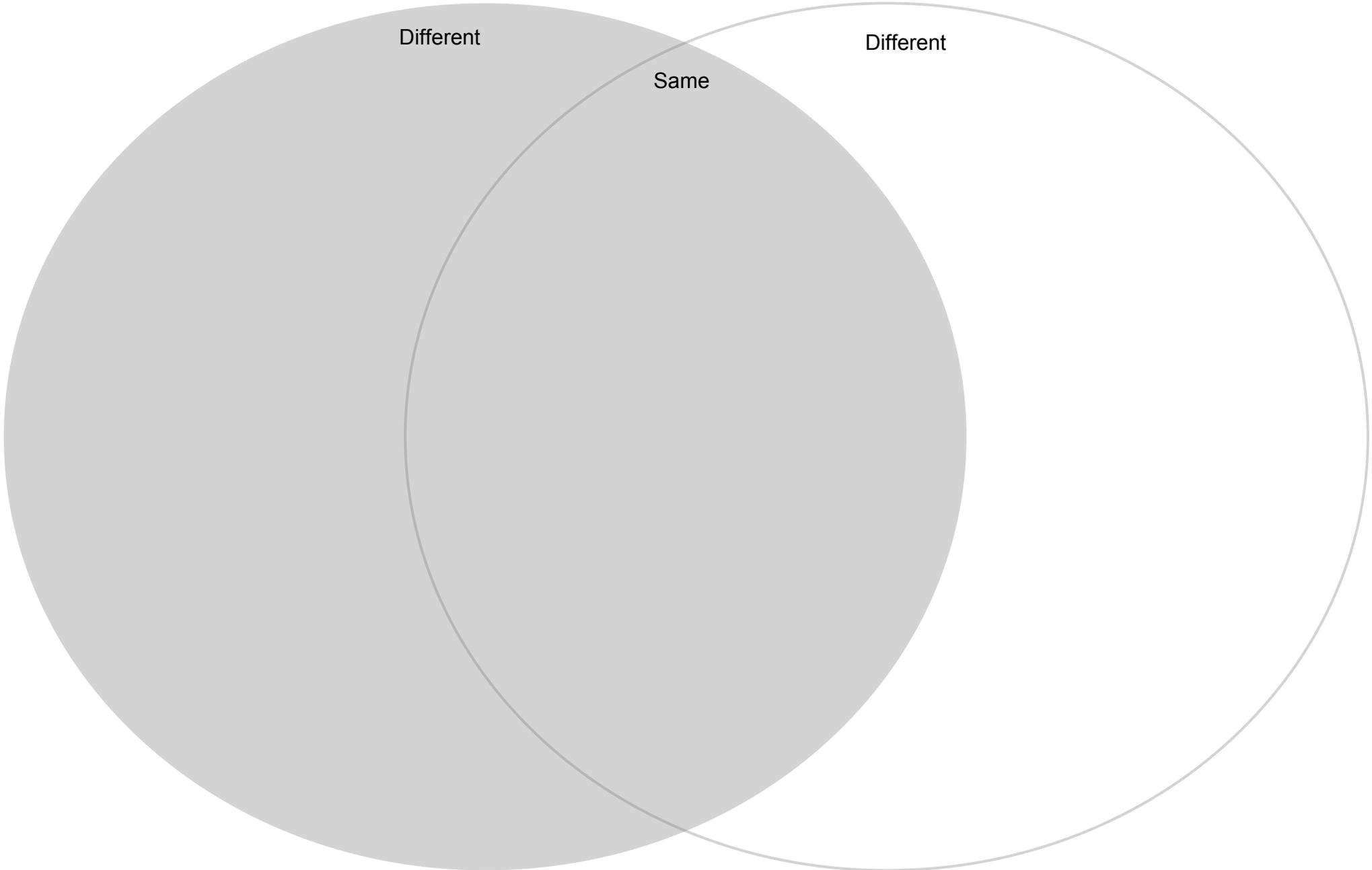
**Caddo Burial Mound C**

**Egyptian Pyramid at Giza**

Different

Different

Same



## Who's Buried Where - And Why?

### Vocabulary

culture - the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people

cultural universal - basic behavior practiced by all cultures, regardless of location or time period

mound - a pile of earth, stones, or other material built up for a specific purpose

pyramid - any large structure with a square base and four sloping, triangular sides

chamber - room used for a specific purpose

elite - group regarded as the finest and most important part of a population, including its leaders

ritual - ceremonial act which follows certain rules or customs

artifact - any object made or used by humans

tomb - chamber used for burial of a dead person(s); monument to a dead person(s), often built over the place where the body or bodies is buried

sarcophagus - ancient stone coffin

# Caddo Burial Notes

Use the following websites to help you answer the questions:

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/ancestors/early.html>

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/fundamentals/graves.html>

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/mounds.html>

<https://thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/caddo-mounds>

1. What is the geographic location of Caddo burial Mound C on the George C. Davis archeological site? (continent, country, state and nearby city)
2. Is Mound C built near a river?
3. Approximately how long did it take the Caddo Indians to build Mound C?
4. Approximately when was Mound C completed?
5. What materials were used to build Mound C?
6. Was any sort of structure built over the burial inside Mound C?
7. Was the inside of Mound C tomb(s) colored or decorated in any way?
8. Was more than one individual buried inside Mound C?
9. To what social class did the individual(s) buried inside Mound C belong?
10. Were any artifacts found inside Mound C?

# Egyptian Burial Notes

1. What is the geographic location of Khufu, the Great Pyramid of Giza archeological site? (continent, current country, governate, city)
2. Is the Great Pyramid of Giza built near a River?
3. Approximately how long did it take the Egyptians to build the Great Pyramid of Giza?
4. Approximately when was the Great Pyramid of Giza completed?
5. What materials were used to build The Great Pyramid of Giza?
6. Was any sort of structure built over the burial inside The Great Pyramid of Giza?
7. Was the inside of the Great Pyramid of Giza tomb(s) colored or decorated in any way?
8. Was more than one individual buried inside The Great Pyramid of Giza?
9. To what social class did the individual(s) buried inside the Great Pyramid of Giza belong?
10. Were any artifacts found inside the Great Pyramid of Giza tombs?

# Caddo Burial Notes Answer Key

Note: For purposes of completing the Venn diagram, in this answer key, the letter 'D' in front of an answer denotes that the Caddo information is different from the Egyptian information. The letter 'S' denotes that it is the same.

1. What is the geographic location of Caddo burial Mound C on the George C. Davis archeological site? (continent, country, state and nearby city)

**D** *North America, USA, Texas, near Nacogdoches*

2. Is Mound C built near a river?

**S** *yes - Neches River*

3. Approximately how long did it take the Caddo Indians to build Mound C?

**D** *300-400 years*

4. Approximately when was Mound C completed?

**D** *AD 1000*

5. What materials were used to build Mound C?

**D** *Earth (dirt), logs, cane*

6. Was any sort of structure built over the burial inside Mound C?

**S** *yes - a 20' mound*

7. Was the inside of Mound C tomb(s) colored or decorated in any way?

**S** *yes - mound was built from different colored layers of soil*

8. Was more than one individual buried in Mound C?

**S** *yes*

9. To what social class did the individual(s) buried inside Mound C belong?

**S** *elite upper class - important individuals*

10. Were any artifacts found inside the Mound C tombs?

**S** *yes - any of the following: ceremonial flint "sword" blade, conch shell drinking cups, stone ear spoons, stone celts (axe heads), wooden objects covered in thin sheets of copper, effigy pipes, arrow points, beaded waist belt*

## **Egyptian Burial Notes**

### **Answer Key**

Note: For purposes of completing the Venn diagram, in this answer key the letter 'D' in front of an answer denotes that the Caddo information is different from the Egyptian information. The letter 'S' denotes that it is the same.

1. What is the geographic location of Khufu, the Great Pyramid of Giza archeological site? (continent, current country, governate, city)

**D** *Africa, Egypt, Giza Governate, Giza*

2. Is the Great Pyramid of Giza built near a River?

**S** *yes - Nile River*

3. Approximately how long did it take the Egyptians to build the Great Pyramid of Giza?

**D** *10-20 years*

4. Approximately when was the Great Pyramid of Giza completed?

**D** *2560 BC*

5. What materials were used to build The Great Pyramid of Giza?

**D** *limestone blocks and casing stones, granite*

6. Was any sort of structure built over this burial?

**S** *yes*

7. Was the inside of the Great Pyramid of Giza tomb(s) colored or decorated in any way?

**S** *yes - hieroglyphs written in red paint found in Queen's chamber*

8. Was more than one individual buried in The Great Pyramid of Giza?

**S** *yes*

9. To what social class did the individual(s) buried inside the Great Pyramid of Giza belong?

**S** *elite individuals (Egyptian royalty - Pharoah Khufu and his queen)*

10. Were any artifacts found inside the Great Pyramid of Giza tombs?

**S** *yes - a ball of black diorite (a type of rock) and a bronze implement of unknown purpose in Queen's chamber; a sarcophagus in the King's chamber*