

Teacher Vocabulary



Acoma Pueblo: Keres-speaking pueblo atop a tall mesa west of Albuquerque

Adaptation: to change something to fit in better with its surroundings

Agriculture: the practice of growing crops

Ancestors: people related to you who were born before you were; this could include your parents as well as people hundreds or thousands of years ago.

Ancestral Pueblo people: name used for Pueblo people before the coming of the Spanish in the 1500s; formerly called Anasazi

Apparel: clothing

Archeological site: a place showing evidence that people have used it, often the remains of buildings and their contents

Archeologist: a scientist who studies people, usually from the past, by looking at things and places that they used

Archeomagnetism: a method of archeological dating based on the last date that clay in a firepit was exposed to the heat of the fire

Architecture: making buildings in a particular style

Artifact: any object that has been made or used by humans

Artist's conception: a drawing made to show a scene that cannot be shown by photo or painting made at the time. The artist works with archeologists, etc, to make the drawing as accurate as possible using available evidence

Atlatl: a throwing stick used to make a spear go farther and with more force than just throwing with one's arm

Bandelier: Bandelier National Monument, near Los Alamos, New Mexico. It was established in 1916 to preserve thousands of archeological sites related to the Ancestral Pueblo people, and was named for early anthropologist Adolph F.A. Bandelier

Barter: trading for something you want without use of money

Basalt: a hard, dense, durable volcanic rock often used for tools such as metates, hammers, and axes.





Baton: flaking tool made from the thick base of an antler

Binder: also called temper; material mixed with clay to help the heat of firing be distributed more evenly. Temper may consist of sand or ground-up stone or potsherds

Breechclout: an item of clothing common all over the Americas (and much of the rest of the world at one time or another), which could consist of an apron front and back, or a long strip of material that went over the belt in front, between the legs, over the belt in the back, and hung down front and back.

Brittle: something that is strong but shatters if dropped or struck, such as glass

Cacique: the religious leader of a group; among old-time Pueblos, he often also settled disputes and made important decisions for the community. Many present Pueblos have caciques.

Carbon 14: a method of archeological dating based on the rate at which Carbon 14 breaks down to Carbon 12

Cavate: small room carved into the cliff, often used as the back room of a talus house

Ceramic: something related to making things out of clay

Ceremonial: items or activities related to religious activities

Checkdams: structures built in arroyos to slow down rain runoff to control flooding or save water for agriculture

Chert: stone similar to flint, used for making sharp-edged tools

Clay pit: place where soil suitable for making pottery can be found and dug up

Cliff dwellers: people who build their homes along cliffs. This location is often useful for defense or solar energy

Cobble: a stone that has washed down a river or stream; often they have become rounded

Cochiti Pueblo: Keres-speaking pueblo along the Rio Grande just south of Bandelier; generally considered the home of the present-day people most closely related to the inhabitants of the large villages in Frijoles Canyon and to the south



Coil: a strip of clay used to build a pot

Coiling: method of making pottery in which the prepared clay is pulled and rolled out into long strips, which are then placed around and around the growing vessel to build its walls. Each strip is pinched onto the one below it, and the seam is usually smoothed out. No wheel is used.

Commissioned: to arrange with an artist to create a particular painting or object

Conchoidal: seashell-shaped fracture pattern found in obsidian and glass

Consequences: what happens when someone does a particular thing; for instance, something bad that happens if someone breaks a rule

Consultation: to ask someone for their opinion, or gain understanding from someone else's knowledge; Bandelier has consultation meetings with Pueblo groups related to the park

Contemporary: something that happens at the same time as something else, or someone who lives at the same time as someone else, or something now

Corbel: a heavy piece of wood used to spread out the weight of roof beams, etc, often seen as a cross piece at the top of an upright beam used to support a porch or roof

Core: chunk of stone from which flakes are removed for making points, etc

Corrugated: pottery in which the inside is smoothed but the marks from pinching the coils together are not polished away on the outside

Cultivating: farming, gardening

Culture: a group of people who share traditions, beliefs, and customs. Sometimes the word is used for the traditions, beliefs, and customs themselves, and things or activities related to them.

Customs: traditional ways of doing things

Decipher: to figure something out or solve a message in code

Dendrochronology: a method of archeological dating based on patterns of tree rings (see the lesson “What We Can Learn From Old Trees?”)





Dig: an archeological excavation

Edible: something that is nutritious and safe to eat

Elder: an older member of a group, depended on by others for their knowledge and wisdom

Embroidery: making designs by sewing threads onto fabric in a pattern

Environment: everything that surrounds a living thing, including other living things, the landscape, plants, water sources, etc

Ethnographer: a scientist who studies about groups and their culture past and present by learning about customs and knowledge from present people

European contact: the point at which Ancestral Pueblo people meet and begin to be influenced by people from Europe, first the Spanish in the 1500s. Usually they are termed Pueblo once this contact has occurred

Firing: the process in which pottery pieces are made hard and strong by exposing them to high heat.

Flake: thin piece of stone chipped from a core to be used to make points, etc

Folk art: a style of art often characterized by energy, enthusiasm, and bright colors, associated with people making objects more for their own use than for the commercial market

Generation: the continuity of people or families, as in grandparents, parents, and children make three generations. Also used to mean the time from one set to the next, how many years from the time someone is born until they have a child.

Geology: the science of studying the earth and how it formed; rocks, erosion, volcanoes, etc

Glaze: a mineral paint, used to decorate or coat pieces of pottery, which melts and becomes vitreous (glassy) when the pot is fired. Often contains lead.

Gourds: relatives of squash which develop a hard or leathery outside; when they are dried out, the seeds can be removed from the inside and the hard rind used for such things as bowls, dippers, rattles, and clay scrapers.

Granite: a hard, dense rock formed inside of mountains; in New Mexico, it is common in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains



Habitat: a place where a creature or plant lives; a good habitat provides everything that a living thing needs, including air, food, water, space, and the right climate.

Hafted: putting a handle, usually of wood, on a tool such as a knife or hammer

Harvest: the crops that have grown in a garden and are gathered at the end of the summer to use for food, such as corn, beans, and squash.

Heritage: knowledge and traditions passed to later generations

Hopi: language spoken at the Hopi villages in northern Arizona

Horno: an outdoor oven shaped like a beehive, made of thick adobe bricks, for baking wheat bread and bizcochitos (cookies). A fire is built inside, and when the insides of the walls are well heated, the fire is swept out, pans of bread dough are put in, a board is placed over the door, and the bread is left to bake until crusty on the outside, tender inside. Introduced by the Spanish.

Irrigation: to bring water to crops by means of ditches from a stream or creek to the garden

Jemez: Towa-speaking pueblo along the Jemez River, northeast of Albuquerque

Kachina: one name for a spirit; in some Pueblo groups dancers represent the kachinas by dressing in costumes including formal masks. Kachina dolls are figures made by parents, particularly among the Hopi, to help their children learn about the many different kachinas. For many pueblos kachinas are considered to be very confidential.

Keres: language spoken at Cochiti, Santo Domingo, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Zia, and Acoma.

Kiln: a structure for firing pottery

Kilt: a garment worn by Ancestral Pueblo men and boys and still worn in Pueblo dances today, consisting of a rectangle of cloth wrapped around the hips and extending to the knees, usually fastened around the waist with a sash

Kiva: a room used by Pueblo people past and present for teaching, meetings, and religious gatherings; mostly used by men; in the past, usually round and underground





Kossa, Koshare: a Pueblo dancer, usually painted in black and white stripes, considered a sacred clown and connected to the ancestors

Legacy: something of lasting value left behind by someone. Sometimes it is an object, but often it is related to greater understanding or greater appreciation of something.

Legend: a story that has been told for many years from generation to generation, often as a learning lesson; sometimes they are metaphors

Lifestyle: the way a living thing lives its life; especially among people, various groups may have very different lifestyles than each other

Lintel: the beam placed at the top of a door or window opening to support the wall above the opening

Lithics: tools or other objects made from stone, or the scraps from making them

Loom: a device for weaving cloth

Maize: the formal name of corn

Mano: the Spanish term for the stone held in one or both hands to grind corn into meal on a metate.

Manta: Spanish word for a piece of cloth, from the verb that means “to cover”. Traditional pueblo dresses are often called manta dresses

Matte-on-black: A type of pottery made famous by potters in Santa Clara and San Ildefonso Pueblos. The background finish is shiny black, and the designs are painted over the shiny surface with slip which, when fired, has a matte (not shiny) texture.

Maul: a stone tool used much like a sledge hammer

Mesa: from the Spanish word for table; a part of a landscape that is much like a hill but flat on top, often with cliffs on the sides

Metate: the Spanish term for the flat stone on which corn kernels are placed to be ground into meal; the grinding is done with a mano

Micaceous: clay containing particles of mica, which sparkle as the pot moves. Most commonly used at Nambe, Picuris, Taos, and Oke Ovinge (formerly San Juan) pueblos, and reputed to be the best material for pots for cooking beans



Migration: moving from one place to another to find a better home or get away from an unsuitable one

Midden: places people throw away things that they do not need any more; often forms a mound.

Mortar: clay, adobe, etc used to hold bricks or stones together when building

Motif: a design, or part of a design, that is a unit recognizable on its own

Multistoried: a building more than one floor tall

Native American: also often known as Indians. The people who were living on the North and South American continents before explorers from Europe and other places arrived, and their descendants.

Obsidian: glassy black volcanic stone used for making extremely sharp tools

Ochre: pigment found in colors from yellow through red; color comes from iron oxide

Oke Owinge: Tewa-speaking pueblo north of Española (formerly known as San Juan)

Olla: a large pottery vessel with a wide body and narrower neck, often used for carrying or storing water; sometimes they could hold as much as two gallons

Oral: saying something aloud instead of writing it down

Oral tradition: information and knowledge being passed from person to person by word-of-mouth

Pajarito: Spanish for “little bird”. Pajarito Plateau is the name for the area around Bandelier

Paste: the clay used to form the body of a pottery vessel

Percussion: method of making sharp edges on lithics by striking one stone with another

Petroglyphs: drawings carved or scratched into rocks or cliffs

Plateau: a wide, basically level landform; in the southwest, erosion often cuts the table land into separate mesas



Plaza: an open space often found in the middle of a Pueblo village, used for many activities including ceremonial dances.

Pojoaque Pueblo: (Po-HWAH-key) Tewa-speaking pueblo south of Española

Polishing stone: a very smooth, rounded stone used for polishing a piece of unfired pottery

Pollen analysis: a method of finding out what environment surrounded an archeological site when it was inhabited, based on what plant pollen is found

Pot sherd: a piece of a broken pot

Potassium-Argon: a method of archeological dating based on the rate at which potassium converts to argon

Pressure-flaking: making sharp edges on lithics using pressure from tools made from antlers

Projectile point: stone shaped to have a pointed tip and sharp edges, to be the head of an arrow or spear

Provenience: the relationship of a sherd or other item in an archeological site to everything else in the site, which provides its value for information

Pueblo: Spanish word for village, often used to mean a community of Native American people with particular customs, including farming, weaving, and making pottery, and their settlement. There are presently 19 pueblos in New Mexico, plus the Hopis in Arizona and Isleta del Sur outside of El Paso, Texas.

Puki: a Tewa term meaning a dish, often made from the bottom of a broken pot, used by potters as a base when building a pot. The puki supports the growing pot, allowing it to be turned without sticking to the table. Some potters make pukis specially for different sizes and shapes of pots.

Puye: a site considered by the Santa Clara Pueblo people to be a home of their ancestors

Qu-weh-nee: the Keres term for the village of Tyuonyi.

Raw materials: materials as they come out of nature, before they have been processed to be used, such as clay just out of the ground, or yucca leaves before the green material is removed



Reconstruction: to rebuild a building or other object, usually to look as it had originally

Recorded history: the time at which people began to write down records of things that had happened

Rio Grande: the largest river in New Mexico; many present-day pueblos are located along it

Roles: the jobs and responsibilities that people are expected to carry out in their families and communities.

San Felipe Pueblo: Keres-speaking pueblo along the Rio Grande south of Cochiti, with long traditions of being connected to the ancestral towns in Bandelier

San Ildefonso Pueblo: Tewa-speaking pueblo along the Rio Grande near Pojoaque; they consider themselves to be the home of the present-day people most closely related to the inhabitants of the Tsankawi section of Bandelier

Santa Clara Pueblo: Tewa-speaking pueblo along the Rio Grande near San Ildefonso and Española; they also consider themselves to be related to the inhabitants of Tsankawi

Santo Domingo Pueblo: Keres-speaking pueblo along the Rio Grande north of San Felipe and south of Cochiti; they consider themselves to be related to the inhabitants of the main section of Bandelier

Sash: a woven belt, often with woven patterns along the length and fringe on the ends

Sherd (sometimes spelled shard): a piece of a broken pottery vessel

Sinew: strong stringy material from animal tendons, used as string or thread

Site: a location; often used to mean a place where people lived and/or where archeological work is being done

Slip: clay thinned with water to the consistency of paint, often used to decorate unfired pottery; it is generally used as the background color, and can also be used to make designs on unfired pottery.

Soot: black, sticky, powdery material from smoke from fires



Spear point or projectile point: piece of stone, bone, or wood (or, later, metal) shaped to a sharp point to be attached to a spear or arrow for hunting or defense

Spirit line: a design motif, usually on Pueblo pottery, symbolizing the custom of leaving an opening in the design so that the artist's creative spirit will not be trapped in that one piece.

Stratigraphy: a method of archeological dating based on finding items at different levels in a site where people lived over a long period; usually the deepest are the oldest

Tact: the process of saying or doing the right thing to avoid offending someone

Talus: loose rock at the base of a cliff

Taos Pueblo: Tiwa-speaking pueblo, most northern along the Rio Grande

Temper: material such as sand or ground-up pottery sherds added to clay to help spread the heat evenly during firing.

Tesuque Pueblo: (Tay-TSU-gay) Tewa-speaking pueblo, just north of Santa Fe

Tine: one of the points on an antler; can be used for pressure flaking

Tiwa, Tewa, Towa: languages in the Tanoan group, related but not mutually intelligible. Tiwa (TEE-wah) is spoken in Taos, Picuris, Isleta, and Sandia. Tewa (TAY-wah) is spoken at Oke Owinge (previously called San Juan), Nambe, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Pojoaque, and Tesuque. Towa (TOE-wah) is spoken only at Jemez.

Trade goods: items carried by traders to sell or barter with other people

Tradition: the way a particular group of people chooses to do something, often passed down through many generations

Trail guide: a booklet containing information on things of interest seen along trails, particularly in parks such as Bandelier.

Tree rings: circular growth patterns that form inside of tree trunks every year that a tree lives; they are wider in wet years, narrower in dry ones (see also "Dendrochronology")



Tuff: Crumbly rock composed of volcanic ash. At Bandelier, the canyon walls and mesas are made of tuff that came out of two huge eruptions of the Jemez volcano over a million years ago. The Ancestral Pueblo people shaped the soft stone into bricks to build their homes and carved small caves into the cliffs to use as rooms

Turquoise: a soft stone, found in varying shades of blue to green, popular for making jewelry throughout the Southwest past and present. There is a source south of Santa Fe near Cerrillos, which has been mined for hundreds or thousands of years.

Utilitarian: pottery made for cooking. This type usually has corrugations on the exterior rather than painted designs.

Vessel: an item of pottery, such as a bowl, jar, etc

Viga: Spanish word for a roof beam

Witch: one English translation for the Pueblo idea of someone willing to hurt other members of the community in order to have power; the word has other meanings in other cultures

Yucca: plant with long, stiff, sharp-pointed leaves, found in dry areas, related to lilies although often mistakenly identified as a cactus (state flower of New Mexico)

Zuni: language spoken only at Zuni (ZOO-nee) Pueblo, and unrelated to any other known language

Zuni Pueblo: Zuni-speaking pueblo south of Gallup which still maintains strong connections to certain locations in Bandelier



Words that present-day Pueblo people ask us not to use:

Abandoned: present-day Pueblo people feel that their ancestors are still present in their old homes such as Bandelier; they don't feel that the sites are abandoned

Anasazi: a word from the Navajo language which means, literally, “ancient people who aren't us” and is often translated as “ancestors of our enemies”. Pueblo people find this inappropriate and offensive, and the term Ancestral Pueblo is generally used instead

Disappeared: present-day Pueblo people know that their ancient relatives just moved to new homes, the villages where their descendants live today; they didn't “disappear”

Prehistoric: when historians talk to each other, they use this term to mean any group of people who do not yet use writing. However, to the general public, it is associated with times when dinosaurs roamed the earth, which is millions of years before Ancestral Pueblo culture had developed, so it can be confusing

Primitive: this word is generally used to mean something that is not very well made or someone who isn't very smart, and neither of those meanings apply to the Ancestral Pueblo people

Rock art: petroglyphs and pictographs, drawings made on cliffs and rocks, have long been known as rock art, but many present Native Americans feel “art” doesn't convey the importance of these drawings for those who made them and their descendants today

Ruins: Pueblo people think of the dwellings as places where their ancestors are still present, and also feel that it is right for a building to go back to the earth after it is used, so they dislike the word “ruins”. Site, home, house, dwelling, etc. can be used instead

Vigas, latillas, manos, metates, etc.: The Pueblo people today have asked Bandelier not to use Spanish terms when referring to their ancestors prior to Spanish contact.

Student Vocabulary



Agriculture: making a living by growing crops

Ancestral Pueblo people: name used for Pueblo people before the Spanish came in the 1500s; formerly called Anasazi

Archeological site: a place that people have used. It can be a home or other building, or another kind of place people used.

Archeologist: a scientist who studies people, usually from the past, by looking at things and places that they used

Bandelier: Bandelier National Monument, near Los Alamos, New Mexico. It was established in 1916 to preserve thousands of archeological sites related to the Ancestral Pueblo people. It was named for early anthropologist Adolph F.A. Bandelier

Basalt: a hard, dense, durable volcanic rock often used for tools such as hammers and corn-grinding stones

Cavate: a small room carved into a cliff, often used as the back room of a talus house

Ceramic: something related to making things out of clay

Ceremonial: something related to religious activities

Cliff dwellers: people who build their homes along cliffs. This location is often useful for defense or solar energy.

Coiling: method of making pottery by rolling the clay into long strips, then taking each strip and coiling it around and around to build a pot. Each strip is pinched onto the one below it. The seam is usually smoothed out. No wheel is used.

Corrugated: pottery in which the marks from pinching the coils together are not polished away on the outside, just on the inside

Culture: a group of people who share traditions, beliefs, and customs. Sometimes the word is used to mean the traditions, beliefs, and customs themselves.

Customs: traditional ways of doing things

Dendrochronology: a method of archeological dating by looking at tree rings





Elder: an older member of a group; others depend on them for their knowledge and wisdom

Firing: making pottery pieces hard and strong by exposing them to high heat.

Generation: the continuity of people or families. Grandparents, parents, and children make three generations. Also used to mean the time from one set to the next, how many years it is from the time someone is born until they have a child.

Harvest: the crops that are gathered at the end of the summer to use for food, such as corn, beans, and squash.

Heritage: knowledge and traditions passed to later generations

Irrigation: to bring water to crops by ditches leading from a stream or creek to the garden.

Kilt: a piece of clothing worn by Ancestral Pueblo men and boys and still worn in Pueblo dances today. It is a rectangle of cloth wrapped around the hips and extending to the knees. It is usually fastened around the waist with a sash.

Kiva: a room used by Pueblo people past and present for teaching, meetings, and religious gatherings. They are mostly used by men and in the past were usually round and underground.

Legend: a story that has been told for many years from generation to generation, often for teaching.

Lithics: tools or other things made from stone, or the scraps from making them.

Maize: the formal name of corn.

Mano: Spanish name for the stone used to grind corn into meal on a metate.

Metate: the Spanish name for the flat stone for grinding corn kernels into meal. The grinding is done with a mano.

Native American: also often known as Indians. The people living on the North and South American continents before explorers from Europe and other places arrived, and their descendants.

Petroglyphs: drawings carved or scratched into rocks or cliffs.



Plaza: an open space in the middle of a Pueblo village. It is used for many activities including ceremonial dances.

Pot sherd: a piece of a broken pot

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Talus house: a house built along the slope of talus at the base of a cliff

Temper: material such as sand or ground-up pottery sherds added to clay to help the heat spread evenly during firing.

Trade goods: items carried by traders to sell or barter with other people

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Vigas, latillas, manos, metates, etc.: The Pueblo people today have asked Bandelier not to use Spanish words when talking about their ancestors before they met the Spanish.