Art and Culture

American Indian Artifacts

2-D Shapes



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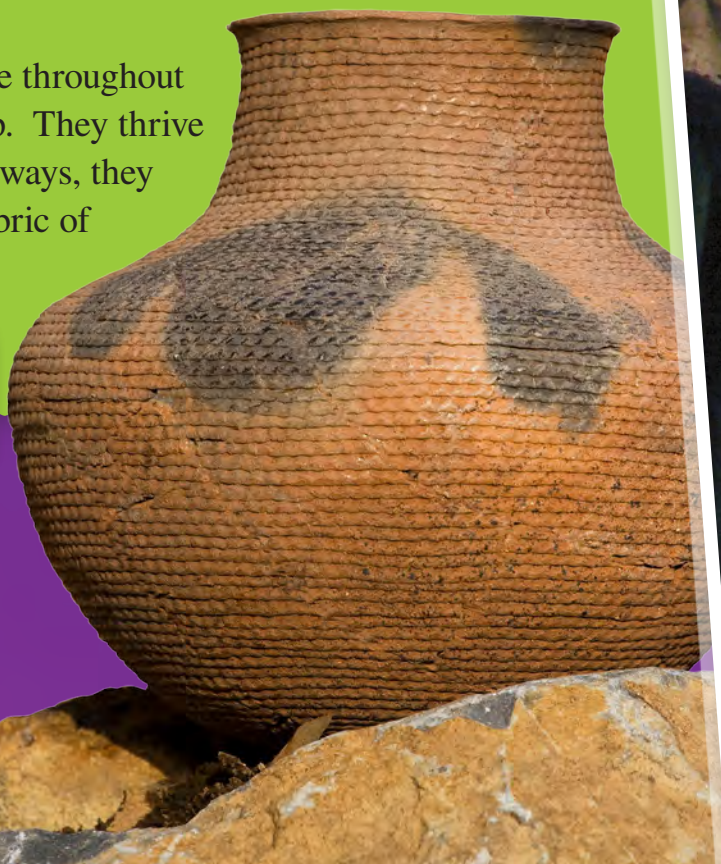
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Exploring the Past

The world is full of interesting people and places. Wherever you go, you can explore the culture of an area. You can study the art and architecture. You can listen to the music. You can eat the food. If you are lucky, you might even find a window into the cultures of long ago.

Throughout most of the United States, the culture you find is relatively modern. It is a young country. The history of the nation goes back only a few hundred years. That is a short amount of time compared with the rest of the world. But, that does not mean the land itself is without ancient history. People were on the land long ago. Some of their cultures live on.

The roots of culture throughout the Americas go deep. They thrive even today. In many ways, they are woven into the fabric of modern culture.



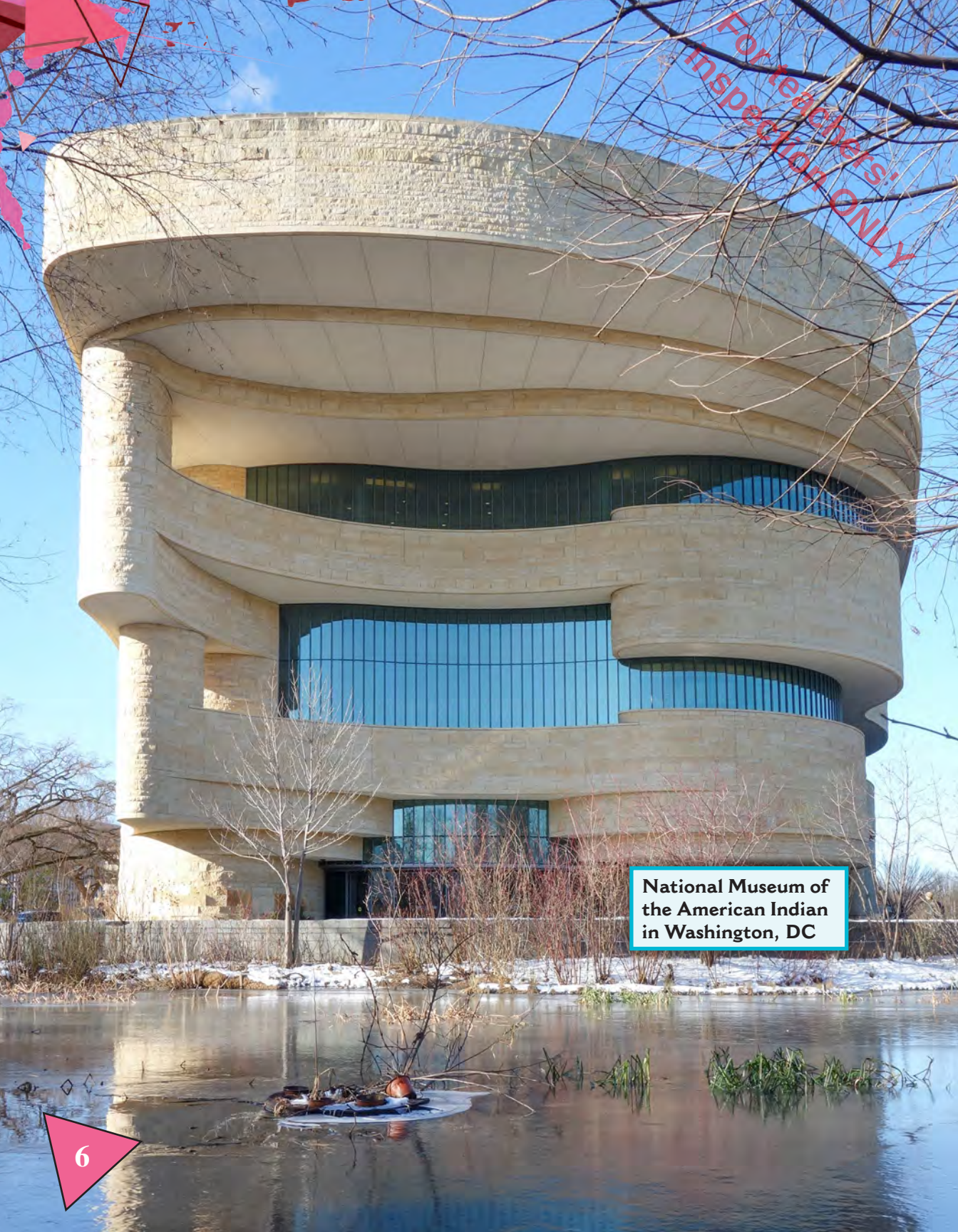
Mogollon pottery from New Mexico, circa AD 1000

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painted hide and artifacts from a Great Plains tribe

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National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC

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Preserving History

If you know where to look, you can see traces of the cultures from long ago. Art and artifacts are in museums around the country. Some, such as the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), are dedicated to the preservation of art and culture. They bring to life the cultures of the **indigenous** people of North and South America. These museums house many works of art. Some of the art is hundreds or even thousands of years old.

All the pieces give us a window into the past. They show what life was like for people then. Some of those people may have stood on the very spot you stand now. The pieces tell a story of their daily lives. They tell stories, too, of ceremony and special times. They teach us about the people and their history. They make the past come alive.



The Millicent Rogers Museum in New Mexico has a gallery with pottery from southwestern tribes, such as the Navajo and Pueblo.



A family tours an exhibit at NMAI in New York City.

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Visiting a Museum

At most museums, there is a wealth of items to see. It can be overwhelming. It is best to pause and look at each item for a while. In this way, you can read about each piece. You can see how old the artwork is, and sometimes you can learn a little bit about the artist. Sometimes, a piece is so old that no one knows who made it. By taking a closer look, you can see tiny details the artist included in the piece. What colors and materials did the artist use? What shapes or **patterns** did the artist create?

Looking at each piece and learning about it can take quite a long time. To take it all in, you might even want to visit again. Exhibits at museums also change often. It can be a new experience every time you go!