Bone Stories Case Studies

What stories do ancient remains tell, and how can we tell those stories accurately today?

In this lesson, you will apply what you have learned about how anthropologists understand ancient peoples' sex and gender by learning about a specific case study that challenged scientists' assumptions about the past.

Part I. Prehistoric Women Were Very, Very Strong

While listening to the podcast, identify different ways the scientists used clues to learn more about prehistoric skeletons.

Characteristic	What it tells us about the skeleton's story

Part II. Case Study Examination

Case study: _____

Before you start to read your assigned case, use the space below to reflect on the image and two questions on your case's slide.

Information matrix: Fill in the spaces below based on the information you found in your article.

Facts and context

When and where did this individual live? When were the remains found?		
What clues exist about the sex and gender of the individual(s)?	Sex chromosomes	
	Bone structure/density	
	Burial objects/context clues	

Article Review

What makes these remains unique and/or challenging to identify?	
What story did these bones tell? What evidence in the reading supports this story?	
How might your personal history or bias affect how you would tell the story of this person?	

Part III. Learning From Others

Listen to each group share what they learned from their case study. Answer the questions below based on what they share.

Case study:	Hasanlu lovers	Pompeii casts	Casimir Pulaski	"Gay caveman"
What traits were used to identify this individual's sex, gender, or sexuality?				
What made these remains unique and/or challenging to identify?				

Reflection questions:

1. What themes did you notice across more than one case study?

2. What is one example of scientists' bias appearing in the original interpretation of one of the case studies? How would you change their description of the case more accurately?

3. When considering these cases, do any of them present more of a challenge to you in terms of telling the story without bias? Why or why not?

Part IV. How We Tell The Stories Of Ancient People

Look over your notes from the presentations we heard and what we learned in this lesson. In the space on the following page, write your ideas about how anthropologists can treat ancient remains respectfully and tell their stories in a way that is accurate.

In your response, be sure to include:
- How to reduce assumptions about the identities of ancient people.
- How to describe a person's sex, gender, and sexuality accurately based on their remains.
- How to name biases scientists may carry into their work.