

A Review of our Lesson on Greece

By Jack

We started our morning on Greece by watching a short slide show, where Big Dog showed us that there are many, many different ways of finding a theory. In one area, a cave in France, people had crawled in thousands of years ago and painted animals on the walls. The archaeologists knew when this was done, and many things about it, but what they wanted to know was: why? Why did these people paint on the walls of the cave? What were they thinking? What function did this area have? So what they did was call some of the few people who still paint pictures on cave walls, the aborigines in Australia. They payed for their flights over to France, and despite some some slight difficulties (the aborigines refused to go into the caves because they thought that they were magical) the aborigines said that the solution was obvious. They were caves where children went to be initiated, to become adults. It was not, obviously, necessarily the right theory, but it was a good one. And so began our class on thinking differently about problems.

Big Dog had laid out, on three tables, what looked like a jumbled mass of pottery, bricks and porcelain. Perhaps there were some differences between the three tables, but I couldn't see it with them all jumbled up. But Big Dog showed us an entirely new way of ordering things. We started at the first table, and he asked us to group all of the objects by type. We did so, and then he asked us to group them by date as well. He helped us a little bit with this, as we actually didn't know how old most of the stuff was. Anyway, when we had we saw a bit of a pattern beginning to emerge. A skeleton of the story also emerged with it.

After we had finished that, we watched another slide show, this one on Ancient Greece. We learned about the location of Greece, sandwiched between four larger countries and all parts of it separated by mountains and the ocean. So, for the first years of Greece, the Greeks were separated into little communities that really didn't like each other that much. There were little kingdoms all over, each ruled by a lord who just happened to be more lucky or have more weapons than anyone else. The lords in these kingdoms told the artisans and craftsmen in their area to work for them, thus giving them materials and wealth. The rich got richer, and the poor got poorer. The rich made the poor construct them enormous tombs. And then everything changed, as the Dorians swept down from above and conquered the divided Greeks. And thus Greece entered a dark age.

On this note, we went to the second level, and applied the same technique we had learned in the first level. From this, we could see that the artifacts got steadily older as we went down, except in a few places where the area was disturbed. Then Big Dog showed us another slide show. This one was about what Greece was like after it emerged from its Dark Age. It tried another system of government, one where everyone had a chance to get a bit of the pie. And it prospered, until the Christians came along and knocked everything down. A look at their architecture gives us a look at their minds.

When we had done that, we reorganized level 3. Now we could see that there was a clear trend towards the artifacts getting older the deeper we went. There was some mixing between layers, which we corrected. Now we could see that this technique truly worked, and gave us a rough skeleton of the story we wanted to tell. We can apply this knowledge to the Greek dig! We watched another slide show, then finished up.