

part. Such is the basic premise of *Before Columbus*. Author Charles C. Mann has condensed and adapted his larger work *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* and packaged it for a broader audience. As a result, his insights are often eye-opening and help us better understand the interpretational challenges faced by contemporary historians, anthropologists, scientists, and more. For instance, traditional textbooks all too often present the peoples of the Americas before Columbus as technologically primitive, but Mann disagrees. In reality, they had well-developed cultures, technology, infrastructures, artistic pursuits, and much more to offer. Consequently, *Before Columbus* provides a number of insights of cultural and historical relevance that will deepen understanding of our view of history, as well as the diversity of contributions different peoples and cultures have to offer.

Introduction

“Etruscan” refers to the people of Etruria, an ancient civilization, located in what is now northern Italy, that influenced the Romans. The Etruscan civilization began around 800 or 900 BC, though historians differ on exact dates.

For an additional perspective, intended for adult or high school readers, on how history books sometimes get things wrong see *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James Loewen (Touchstone, 1996).

To Discuss After You Read

13. By what name is Tisquantum usually known? [Intro] ➔

Note: In reference to the mentions of “11,000 years ago” on page 3, “12,000 years ago” on page 4, and other similar time frames, see our Initial Comments of this book for a note about the author’s old-earth perspective.

Honoring or preserving the dead is not a practice limited to the ancient Chinchorro people. You and your children are no doubt aware of the practice of mummification practiced in ancient Egypt. Religiously speaking, some beliefs honor the dead in other ways, such as Shinto in Japan. Shinto shrines, for instance, are places where ancestors are honored. Such practices are quite different from the Christian viewpoint. Christians have historically respected the body, even after death, believing that human beings are made in God’s image and, therefore, of value. Christianity also teaches a future resurrection of the body, which is why historically Christians have preferred burial over cremation. However, Christian views of death and the afterlife differ in key areas from those of, say, the ancient Egyptians.

Is radiocarbon dating reliable? Various methods of scientific dating exist, but not everyone agrees on how reliable such methods are. While those who hold to an old earth perspective generally have no qualms with ancient dates resulting from methods such as radiocarbon dating, others aren’t so pleased with the alleged millions or even billions of years scientists often use to refer to the age of the earth or the universe. It’s beyond our scope to get into the details of radiocarbon dating here, but feel free to look into it further on your own if you’d like.

The author brings up an important point in the sidebar on page 11. He writes: “The case of the carved gourd reminds us that even when we find artifacts from the distant past, we cannot always discover exactly what they mean.” In many ways archaeologists must speculate or make educated guesses about what they find. A lot of times this involves forensic science, much like modern detectives apply when attempting to determine what has taken place at a crime scene that also occurred in the past. The so-called scientific method prefers testable, repeatable ways of discovering truth, but by definition historical events are not repeatable. Archaeologists, must instead look for clues and do their best to come up with what they think may have happened long ago or what they think an artifact represents or means.

14. Who were the mummy makers? [chap. 1] ➔

15. How is radiocarbon dating supposed to work? [chap. 1] ➔

16. What are the big mounds found at Huaricanga? [chap. 1] ➔

17. What’s special about the carved gourd the author writes about? [chap. 1] ➔

Timeline and Map Activities

Note: To refresh on how to do the timelines and the Markable Map refer to notes found in **Section Four**.

🌐 **Pilgrims/Mayflower (1620)**

🌐 **Tisquantum/Squanto (ca. 1585–1622)**

🌐 *Massachusetts; Rhode Island* (map 1)

🌐 *Spain; England; Italy; Sahara Desert* (map 2)

🌐 *Atlantic Ocean; South America; Mexico; Asia; Europe; India; China; Middle East; Pacific Ocean* (map 3)

🌐 *Andes Mountains; Peru; Chile (Atacama Desert)* (map 5)

🌐 *Egypt; Iraq; Sumer* (map 6)

Current Events | Two or three reports

We believe students need to learn that world affairs—matters of social, political, economic, and cultural concern—are appropriate for their interest: they should be informed about these matters, and they ought to be forming biblically-appropriate opinions about them. As citizens of God’s Kingdom, they are called upon to be gracious (and, therefore, informed) ambassadors to the peoples and kingdoms of this world.

The “textbook” for your study of current events should be articles found in current newspapers and magazines.¹

Beginning in seventh grade, we believe students ought to begin to add a statement of their own position on the issues of the day and to explain why they believe and feel as they do. Once each week, by Day 5, students must report on some matter of significant local, regional,

1. Many people wonder what magazines or newspapers we might suggest that could provide a broader, more well-rounded perspective on current events than those to which they are currently subscribing. See “A Brief List of Magazines and Newspapers for Current Events to Study” (**Section Three:** Instructor’s Guide Resources in this guide).