



Time Detectives: How Archaeologists Use Technology To Recapture The Past

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Reports on some notable archaeological finds of recent years. The author describes how today's archaeologists use science and technology to recapture the past, for instance, by studying ancient diets from bone collagen and reconstructing lost landscapes from fossilized seeds and grains.

Time Detectives: How Archaeologists Use Technology To Recapture The Past Details

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David R. says

In spite of well written chapters centered on archaeological projects across the globe, there are two enormous problems. First, the title is misleading. Technology is discussed but plays only a small supporting role, and Fagan glosses over archaeological technology most of the time. Second, Fagan (as I have learned in several books) persistently avoids appropriate documentation of his claims. There are no footnotes (!) and what passes for references is a lightly populated appendix of "additional reading" opportunities. I'm a little suspicious of a number of Fagan's assertions and found notable errors in the chapter on the peoples of the southwest USA and I suppose we can only take the author's word on it. I'm not recommending this book to the casual reader of the subject of archaeology. Other works more seriously discuss most if not all of the same sites.

Joseph Mello says

Great book, showing the emergence of how teams of specialists have changed the face of archaeology over the past five decades. I liked the range of digs the author covered - from the Moche lords in Peru, to a small gathering in the Netherlands where a few people sat down to carve arrowheads and tools. he also introduces and describes the new technologies being used. For me, who has unfortunately become an armchair archaeologist, I was happy to find a book like this that described methods, tools, etc. It is also very, very readable - not at all dry or academic. I'm going to check out Mr. Fagan's other books, and maybe put a shovel in the dirt in my backyard (lol).

Danita says

This is a pretty good book. Easy to read with short sections on a wide range of periods and areas. This book has lots of fascinating information and is a good read for anyone just getting interested in archeology.

Dave Nichols says

Moves along nicely for a subject that has potential to be rather boring.

Christopher Obert says

This book is a collection of 13 essays on modern archaeology and how technology is changing that field of study. It is also about how the use of many different scientific disciplines (scientists in different fields of study working at dig sites and in the lab) can bring out much more information than an archaeologist working alone with ancient artifacts. The book is divided into three sections: Hunters and Gathers, Farmers,

and Civilizations, and covers discoveries from all across the world. The history of the world's civilizations is the history of each one of us and I found each article interesting and very much worth reading. Another important aspect of this book is that we can learn so much more by working together than by working alone. An important message for the world we live in today!

April Brown says

What ages would I recommend it too? – Twelve and up.

Length? – Several days read.

Characters? – None.

Setting? – Our world throughout history.

Written approximately? – 1995.

Does the story leave questions in the readers mind? – Ready to read more.

Any issues the author (or a more recent publisher) should cover? No.

Short storyline: The "Time Detectives" does an excellent job of blending storytelling how a certain set of artifacts may have come into being at a time and place in the past. Many locations throughout the world are discovered under the guidance of the author. At the end, are chapter separated sections for all of the written documents the authors used to write the chapter. Discussion of new and interesting archeological and dating techniques are discussed in chapters as relevant to the specific digs.

Notes for the reader:

Valerie says

I sometimes find Fagan a little dry to read, but he always impresses with his subject matter, and his knowledge.

Tom Schulte says

I really, really enjoyed this archaeology book. The focus is on the techniques and methods sifters and seekers use to date remains, re-assemble them, and read the history from such ancient scraps as debitage (the flakes left over from making stone age tools.) Such stunning tales include rebuilding source rocks out of debitage to ascertain two, different-handed tool makers sat side-by-side and putting together a cannibalized skeleton to retell events of human butchery and boiling.

The excessive off-the-cliff mass kills of buffalo by Native Americans, far in excess of their survival needs

was enlightening (reminding me that all humanity is at times gluttons) as was the epigraphy of deciphering Mayan.

The only complaints that kept me from giving it 5 stars:

1] I needed more pictures and illustrations

and,

2] For the epigraphy topics, like Mayan and the day-to-day writings of Roman soldiers posted at Hadrian's Wall, I wanted more actual quotes, regardless of how mundane.

Ron says

While less about the technology than it purports to be, this is still a decent exploration of many interesting finds (though Fagan has since proven to me that he is a rigid, patriarchal thinker who still adheres to outmoded views of human nature and societal structure).

Tom says

This is a pretty good book for introducing a young person to the profession and tools utilized in archaeology. The author describes a number of well known sites and identifies techniques used to identify and date materials that have been found at these sites. One nice addition is a section on suggested further readings related to each chapter. This appears to be somewhat of an after-thought as the text is lacking in footnotes and references.
