Ancient Lives

**Archaeologists** excavate sites to find objects humans left behind long ago. Sometimes they find the remains of people themselves! Archaeologists are like detectives who piece together these artifacts to uncover clues about human history. For example, archaeologists studying the ancient pyramids in Egypt learned about the lives and deaths, from pets to farming, of people living in Egypt more than 2,000 years ago. Scientists even found one high priestess’s pet monkey buried at her feet!

Ancient writings are a great way for us to learn the thoughts, feelings, and lifestyles of humans who lived before us. In Egypt, for example, people wrote on **papyrus**, paper made from water plant stems. More than a hundred years ago, archeologists discovered thousands of papyrus manuscripts in an ancient trash.
heap. They called them the **Oxyrhynchus Papyri** (you say it like this: *ox-ee-reen-kus pap-eye-reye*). Some of the papyrus pieces were large, complete documents, and others were scraps. Instead of using letters from the alphabet you're reading on this page, most of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri are written in the Greek alphabet or the Coptic alphabet.

**Linguistic anthropologists** study human languages. They have decoded thousands of ancient manuscripts, and learned a lot about ancient life from them. They found recipes for ancient medicines, scripts for old plays, and even a letter from a wrestler saying he would lose his match on purpose for money. Though scientists are working hard to decode documents, they still have thousands of manuscripts left to decode, and they need your help.

Let's do it together! Do YOU want to help? Together, we will become archaeological transcriptionists and help decipher real ancient texts. But first, we need to learn more about transcribing and translating, and practice our transcription skills.
It’s like a jigsaw puzzle with a BUNCH of missing pieces!