Charles Leonard Woolley
1880–1960

WHY HE MADE HISTORY
Leonard Woolley excavated the ancient city of Ur on a grand scale for more than a decade. His work uncovered fascinating artifacts and a huge amount of information about one of the world’s first cities.

As you read the biography below, think about how Leonard Woolley deepened and shared his knowledge of the development of civilization at Ur.

It was the opportunity of a lifetime for Charles Leonard Woolley. The British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania had chosen him to direct the excavations at the ancient city of Ur. Woolley would not disappoint them. He had already done important work in the field of archaeology. He had spent time in Sudan, Syria, and Egypt, excavating artifacts from ancient civilizations.

In 1922, Woolley arrived at the site of Ur in what is now Iraq, where he stayed for 12 years. His work during that time was extensive. Hundreds of workers labored alongside him. They unearthed whole districts and even suburbs of the city. The city tell, or mound, was also excavated from top to bottom. This ancient mound contained the remains of a series of settlements at Ur. Its bottom layer showed that a farming village had been located there around 4700 BC. Other evidence suggested that at one time a flood overwhelmed the village. This discovery was exciting because it seemed to match the account of a great flood in the Bible.

Woolley’s finds at Ur were impressive. The royal cemetery, which included the graves of both royalty and their court, was a spectacular discovery. Woolley also uncovered a ziggurat. This unusual temple tower looked something like a pyramid with steps. At its top was a shrine to a god. Other buildings and thousands of artifacts revealed all kinds of information about daily life at Ur and the government, religion, art, and literature of the early civilization that developed there.

In 1927, Woolley began publishing results of the excavations at Ur. Volume after volume detailed his discoveries at the site. Woolley also wrote other books about Ur. When the excavation shut down in 1934, Woolley continued to work at other sites, but Ur remained his life’s work.
It is almost impossible to speak of Ur without also saying the name of Leonard Woolley.

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**

1. **Recall** How did Leonard Woolley share what he learned from excavating the ancient city of Ur?

2. **Express and Support a Point of View** What discovery would you have been most excited about if you had been involved in excavating Ur, and why?

**ACTIVITY**

Suppose you are Leonard Woolley. The excavations at Ur have come to an end. A special ceremony is planned to thank everyone who took part. As director, you will make some remarks at the ceremony. Use information from the biography to compose a brief speech. Write your speech on a separate piece of paper. Deliver the speech to your class.