



# These Old Bones

A Worldbuilding Game in Reverse

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A map making game about digging up the past and telling stories about a bygone world.

## What you need

- 2 - 6 people
- 2 - 4 hours
- a shared space to draw your map
- a six-sided die(d6)
- a coin

## Setup

Most of the world building will happen as you discover more objects and structures from a forgotten time. However, before you start digging, discuss together what kind of area you are in. Is it an arctic wasteland, a murky swamp, or something else? **Indicate the type of terrain on the map.**

Consider, also, the size of the space you are excavating. Is this a single room, an estate, a whole city, or something else? **Indicate the type of space on the map.**

Decide, as a group, what led you to decide to conduct your research in this place. What are your assumptions? What do you hope to find?

Real-life archaeological sites rarely exist in isolation. Are you from this area? What communities live nearby? How are you working with them?

Now, go around the table and let each player briefly describe one kind of tool your team will be using to find, excavate, or learn about the things you discover. The tools you choose will help frame the level of technology your team has at their disposal. Where did you acquire them?

## Player turns

On your turn:

- Optionally, add something to the structure or the landscape. This could be another level to the structure, a river, or something else.
- Add an artifact to the map. Your drawing should be indistinct and open to interpretation. As you learn more about your artifact you can add details and/or adjust the size. However, refrain from erasing the drawing, unless it is offensive or upsetting in some way.
- Flip a coin to determine if it is older or newer than your team's previous discovery. **On heads the discovery is newer and on tails it is older.** The degree of difference is completely up to you.
- Roll a d6 to determine how clear the use of your discovery is and how much detail you can find.
  - On a 1-2, you found...something...**confusing**?
  - On a 3-4, it could be one of two **conflicting** things.
  - On a 5-6 the purpose of this object is **conclusive**.
- If the artifact is **confusing**, roll 2 d6 to learn a little more about it.

1	It's a fragment of something.	1	It's heavier than it should be.
2	It's made of an unknown material.	2	It's lighter than it should be.
3	It makes you feel weird when you touch it.	3	It gives off a strange smell.
4	You can't shake the sense that it's watching you.	4	It gives off a faint light.
5	It makes an eerie sound when you approach it.	5	It has a hidden compartment or layer.
6	It hums with energy.	6	It can't be moved.

- If the artifact is **conflicting**, roll 2 d6 to learn more about it.

1	It seems to have once been alive but does not seem to be organic in nature.	1	It seems to have been used for something other than its intended purpose.
2	It seems both naturally occurring and made for people.	2	It's pieces are scattered about and you can't quite tell what is actually part of it.
3	It seems to have been made for children or animals.	3	It's seeping some kind of liquid.
4	It's stored like foodstuffs but could have never been edible.	4	It's missing a key component that would surely make its purpose more clear.
5	It's for making things or taking them apart.	5	When you lick it, it tastes saltier than you expected and you pick up notes of something sweet.
6	It's either for self defence or it's some kind of toy.	6	There are signs that it was once painted or decorated, but it is hard to tell in what way.

- If the artifact is **conclusive**, roll 2 d6 to learn a lot more about it.

1	It is a passage or form of transportation.	1	It had a ceremonial or religious purpose.
2	It is a weapon or a tool.	2	It sheds light on a previous discovery.
3	It is some kind of artwork or decoration.	3	It had a regular household use.
4	It is some kind of game or musical instrument.	4	It had a disgraceful or secret use.
5	It had a hygienic purpose.	5	It had a community use.
6	It is the remains of one or more people or animals.	6	It was a component of a larger object or structure.

- Talk about how you found the artifact using one of the tools your team has brought.
- Optionally, relate your discovery to another that's been made in this game or to a feature of the landscape that's been described.
- Finally, describe what you've found and theorize about what it may have meant to the people who used it. What, if anything, do the locals say about it?
- Feel free to add details to the initial drawing you made as you describe your discovery.

Play moves in rounds. At the end of the round, take turns to do any or none of the following in connection with the artifact described by the person that went before you:

- Describe how a discovery from this round has survived into the present day, or influenced something that exists now.
- Present a theory about how a **conflicting** or **confusing** artifact might have survived until the present day. It can be as probable or far-fetched as you like.
- Frame a scene that shows who might have made one of your artifacts and how they might have made it.
- Frame a scene that shows one of your artifacts in use in the past. It can be as factual or fantastical as you like.

## Ending the game

There is no set end point to the game - you can play as many rounds as the table would like. Remember to take rest breaks between rounds or whenever you need to.

When you collectively decide it's time to wrap up, describe as a group:

If you found the remains of people, how do you work with the local communities to give them a respectful re-burial?

If you're from elsewhere, how do you give back to the local communities and the land before you leave this place?

How do you record and share your findings, and what input do nearby communities have into representing them? **You may not remove anything from the area for display** - you must leave things as you found them.

Finally, describe how your findings are received by your own communities. What do people think about them in the present? In the future?