Discovered: Oldest Writing in the New World

Anthropologists study people **(17)** _____. Items those men, women, and children left behind when they died – **(18)** _____ – tell anthropologists a lot. And sometimes even their words survive.

Experts believe that a discovery in Mexico, near the capital city of ancient people called the Olmec, is the oldest example of writing that has ever been found in the Americas. The people who created it probably lived 3,000 years ago, **(19)** _____.

Stephen Houston, **(20)** _____, says the discovery is extremely exciting. "It makes clear that the Olmec were literate, **(21)** _____. It's like hearing voices from the past," he says.

But experts don't know exactly what the writing says. If you have ever tried to figure out a message written in code, you have a pretty good idea of the hard work ahead. Finding other examples of Olmec writing could help crack the code. "We could have whole sets of ancient writing **(22)** _____," says Houston. "There are many puzzles to be solved, and this is just one of them."

A who decide to study past cultures
B which is long before Columbus arrived in the New World
C who is an expert on the writing systems of ancient cultures
D that seem to show religious objects
E which will basically make ancient people speak to us directly
F that they could read and write
G who are no longer living
H which include everything from clothing to jewelry and tools

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