

# Great Zimbabwe

A Reading A-Z Level L Leveled Book  
Word Count: 485

LEVELED BOOK • L

# Great Zimbabwe

## Connections

### Writing and Art

Make a poster about the flag of Zimbabwe. Draw a diagram of the flag. Label the parts and write about what they represent.

### Social Studies

With your class, describe how you would travel from where you live to Zimbabwe. Discuss what oceans, continents, or landforms you would cross to get there.

Reading A-Z

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Written by Eleanor Frost

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# Great Zimbabwe



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## Focus Question

What is Great Zimbabwe?

## Words to Know

complex	ruins
enclosure	site
experts	stacked
local	tribe
preserved	

Front cover: A large cone-shaped tower stands within the city of Great Zimbabwe.

Title page: A visitor explores a narrow stairway in Great Zimbabwe.

Page 3: Beautiful views of Great Zimbabwe reveal the rolling hills of the southern African landscape.

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### Correlation

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Reading Recovery	18
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A bird statue shows that birds were an important symbol to the people who lived in Great Zimbabwe.

## An Ancient City

The ancient city of Great Zimbabwe was once rich and powerful. Now the city is empty. Its **ruins** give us some clues about what life was like there. However, there are still many mysteries about the people who once lived there.

## Where Is It?

The ruins of Great Zimbabwe are in the southeastern part of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a country in southern Africa. It is north of the country of South Africa. It is west of Mozambique.



Drawings made in 1892 show the floor plan and objects found near Great Zimbabwe.

## Who Built It?

At first, European explorers were not sure who built Great Zimbabwe. However, **experts** can now prove that **local** people built the great city. Both works of art and the way that the walls were built help prove this fact. Most people think that the builders were a **tribe** called the Shona. The word *Zimbabwe* is thought to mean “stone houses” in the Shona language.

## Building the Walls

Builders used stone bricks to build the walls of Great Zimbabwe.

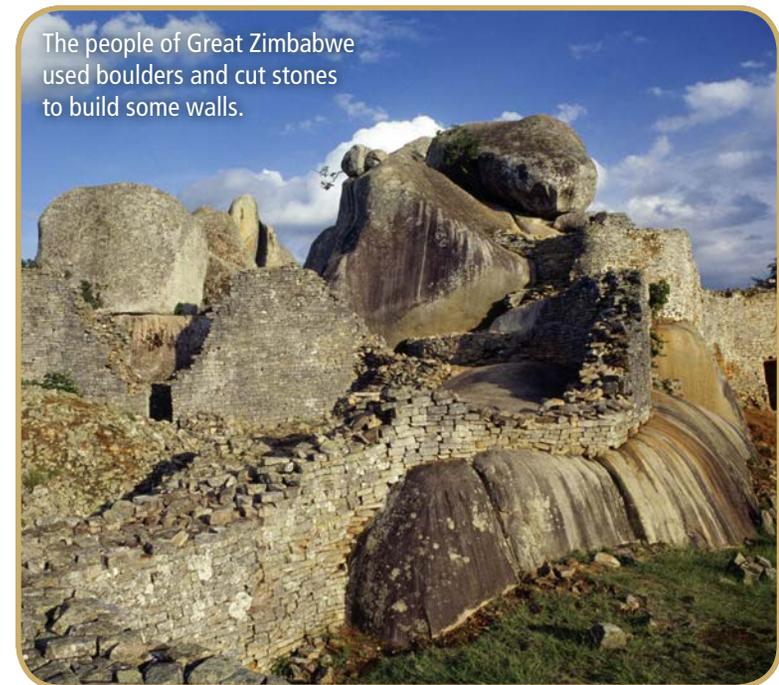
First, they split huge rocks in the countryside to make bricks.



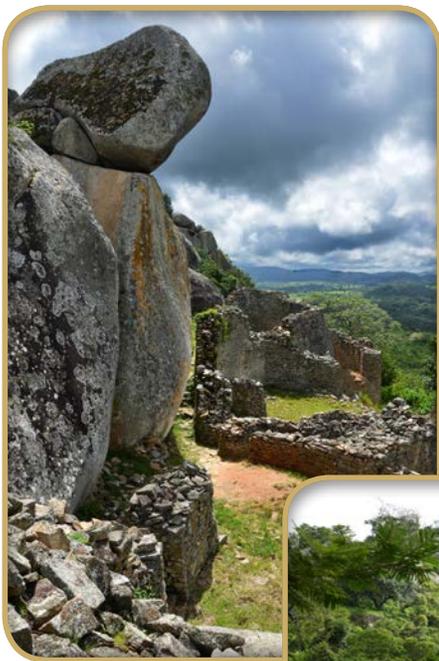
Some of the walls of Great Zimbabwe are very tall. Many people visit the city each year.

Then, they **stacked** the bricks to build high walls. They did not use anything to hold the stones together. However, the stones fit together tightly. The walls are well built.

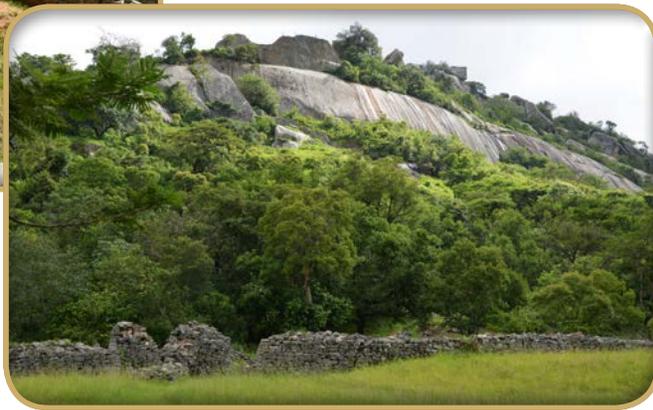
In some places, huge rocks form part of the walls. The walls of Great Zimbabwe are curved instead of straight.



The people of Great Zimbabwe used boulders and cut stones to build some walls.



The views looking down from the top (left) and looking up at the Hill Complex (below) are both beautiful.



### Three Areas

The city has three main parts. The first is the **Hill Complex**, a large stone building on a hillside. This is the oldest area of the city. The kings of Great Zimbabwe may have lived here.

In the valley below, many smaller houses form the Valley Ruins. The houses were made of a mixture of clay and small rocks called *daga*. The people of the city lived in these houses.

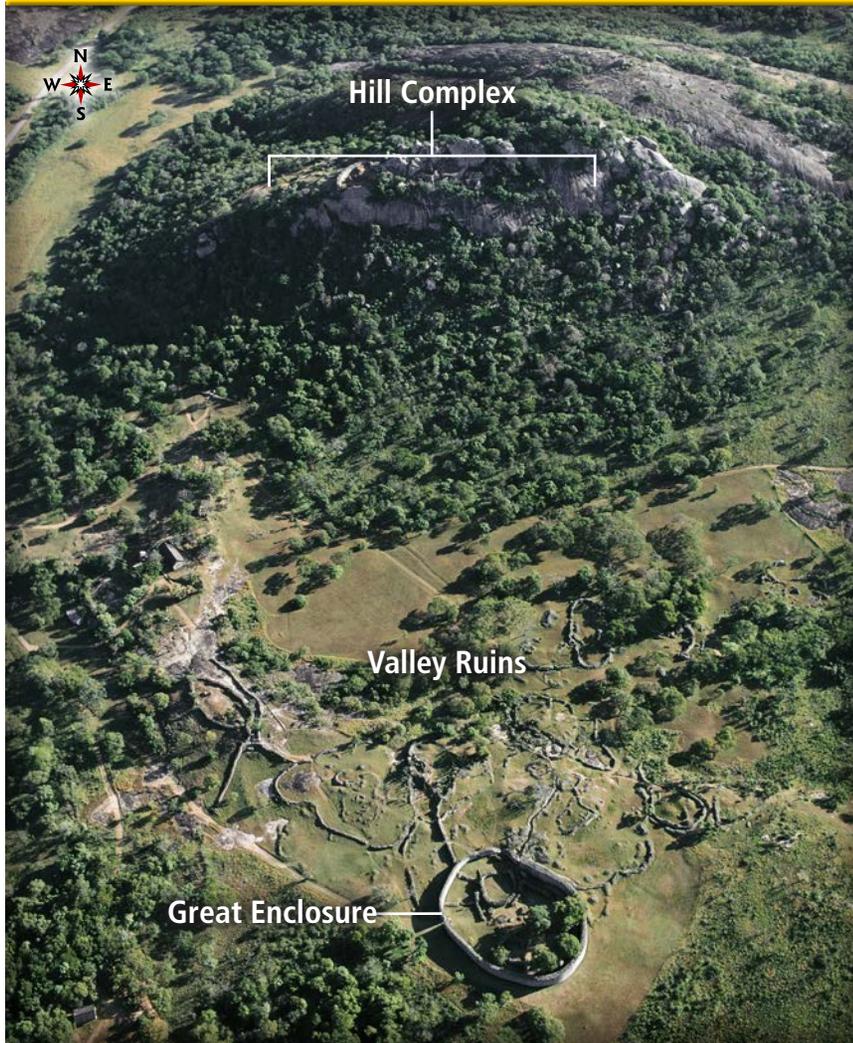
Across the valley is the **Great Enclosure**. Inside is a tall building in the shape of an oval. It is the largest ancient building in southern Africa and may have been a palace.

Small houses once dotted the area of the Valley Ruins.



The curved wall of the Great Enclosure shows that its builders liked round shapes.

## Great Zimbabwe



The walls of Great Zimbabwe were:

- 11 meters (36 ft.) high in some places—as tall as a three-story building
- up to 6 meters (20 ft.) thick in some places
- very smooth in some places

## A Great City

Great Zimbabwe was rich and powerful hundreds of years ago. The people raised crops and cattle. They also traded with other people from West Africa and the Middle East. They even traded with China, which is very far away from Great Zimbabwe.



These stone birds are the most famous works of art from Great Zimbabwe.



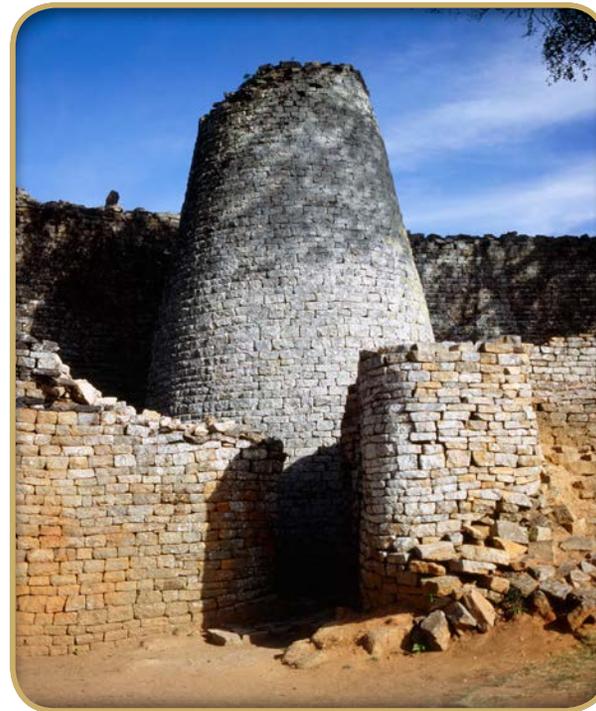
Small statues of a human (top) and what might be an eagle with a human face (right) were likely made in Great Zimbabwe.



However, after doing well for hundreds of years, the people left their city. They may have gone to find better farmland or better trade. Nobody knows for sure.

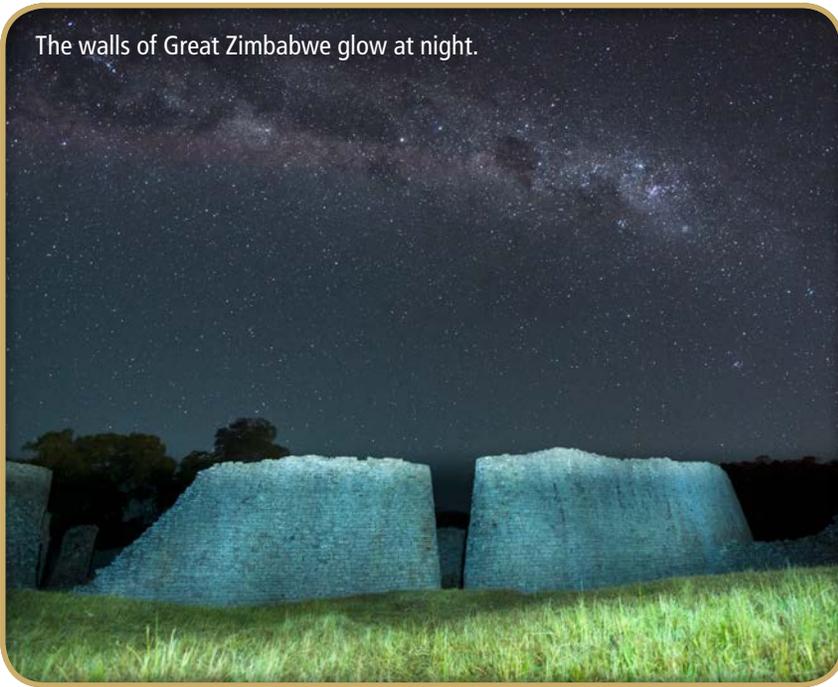
## Mysteries Remain

Scientists still have many questions about the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. For example, they do not know the purpose of some of its buildings. They also do not know why the people built the tall stone walls. Finally, there is the question of why the people left the city.



Nobody knows why people built this mysterious tower within the Great Enclosure.

The walls of Great Zimbabwe glow at night.



The ruins of Great Zimbabwe have been damaged. People have stolen from the **site**. Wind, rain, and plants have caused problems. Laws protect the ruins, but more money and workers are needed to take care of the site. If the ruins are **preserved**, perhaps someday scientists can solve the mysteries of Great Zimbabwe.

## Glossary

- complex** (*n.*) a group of buildings close to one another used for a common purpose (p. 9)
- enclosure** (*n.*) an area that is surrounded and sealed off by something (p. 10)
- experts** (*n.*) people who have a lot of knowledge about a subject (p. 6)
- local** (*adj.*) related to a specific and nearby place (p. 6)
- preserved** (*v.*) taken care of and saved for the future (p. 15)
- ruins** (*n.*) the remains of an old building or other structure (p. 4)
- site** (*n.*) the location where something is found or took place (p. 15)
- stacked** (*v.*) piled objects one on top of another (p. 8)
- tribe** (*n.*) a group of people who share a past and land (p. 6)