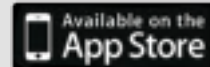


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DISCOVER A TREASURE TROVE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE UAE

BY FRANCESCA AFFLECK

However long you have lived in the UAE, there is always more to uncover. This ever-innovating nation consistently provides us with new opportunities, and reveals to us clues about its historical and geological past.

The Ministry of Education's **UAE Social Studies** curriculum has pointed us in the right direction in terms of beginning to unpack the past and look towards the future. As educators, we owe it to ourselves and the young people who call this country 'home', to discover more about where they live.

The crucial word here is **curiosity**. It was, for me, what fuelled years of research, which began many years ago, as a Year 5 teacher in Dubai.

For example, did you know that thousands of years before the Burj Khalifa was built, camel caravans stopped at a caravanserai practically in its shadow? Did you know that bone ash in a cave in Mleiha, Sharjah and flint sites in Jebel Barakah in Abu Dhabi tell us that early Man travelled up through Arabia from Africa before they dispersed across the globe? That elephants roamed through the savannah-like Mleisa in Abu Dhabi 6-8 million years ago? Have you ever wondered who lived in the hidden villages in the mountains of Ras Al Khaimah, or why seafarers from Portugal built forts in Fujairah? Did you know that the smaller emirates of Um al Quwain and Ajman were once important bronze age sites?

Teams of archaeologists, historians and geologists, from the UAE and around the world, have been studying these sites and natural features and are making new discoveries everyday with the help of modern technology such as carbon dating. The information they uncover is making its way into modern museums such as the Louvre in Abu Dhabi, Sarouq al Hadid in Dubai or Al Hisn fort in Sharjah - not to mention some of the more established museums, housed in forts in Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, Ajman and Umm Al Quwain, as well as websites and books. For those



students who are more inclined to learn using mobile devices, there's the new Abu Dhabi Culture app or newspaper articles from local newspapers such as The National or Gulf News.

Exploring, studying and discovering the United Arab Emirates provides students with a number of opportunities: to **think critically** about the impact of the rapid development of the country; **make links** between trade and transportation in the early days and influences on life here, then and now, and **hypothesise** about clues in the numerous archaeological sites. We can all be inspired by the heritage of a people who lived so resourcefully in a harsh environment – an excellent case study about the use of **natural resources**. We can **ask questions** about how the Arabian Peninsula was formed geologically, **discover** when and how the desert or Hajar mountains were formed or why the Arabian Gulf is so shallow. **Analyse**

settlements in this region, from the stone age through to today. Dig deeper and you will find that this area was on the path to **globalisation** long before you think.

So if you are looking to instil **curiosity**, 21st century skills such as **inquiry** and **critical thinking** or ensure your teaching is **cross curricular** and **relevant**, then learning and teaching about the UAE provides all those paths.

Discovering the United Arab Emirates the book, provides a gateway into learning more about where we live, providing answers to a multitude of questions – and fuelling curiosity to discover the answers to more. With the help of geologists, geographers and historians, the book and associated lesson plans, provide a comprehensive look at the past, present and future of the United Arab Emirates.

Happy discovering...



Francesca Affleck is the Author of *Discovering the United Arab Emirates* and an Education Consultant. In between consultancy projects, she is often found in schools offering author talks and workshops, writing lesson plans, working towards a Master's degree in Educational Leadership or traveling across the Emirates with her camera.