

Historical Adventures of Madison and Cash

THE MAP IN THE ATTIC

The Secret Highway of American History



CHACO CANYON, NM

CAHOKIA, IL

HOPEWELL, OH

MESA VERDE, CO

by Katie Swank

The Great Metropolises and Earthworks



Prologue: The Text on the Page

Madison adjusted the desk lamp, angling the beam of light directly onto the crisp, heavy pages of her textbook. The house was completely quiet, save for the rhythmic drumming of unusual mid-October rain against the glass of the Oceanside attic window. She ran a finger over the smooth, glossed paper of Chapter One, reading the textbook she had found at a nearby thrift shop.

She read the words carefully, but her mind began to push back against the common core history which was typically taught in public schools. The book called it an "untamed wilderness," yet right there on the pages of this old book, the facts told a completely different story. Madison leaned forward, her blue eyes scanning the detailed paragraphs:

The Great Metropolises and Earthworks

Unlike the common misconception of a completely untamed wilderness,

large urban networks spanned the continent.

- **Cahokia Mounds (Illinois):** Located just across the Mississippi River from modern-day St. Louis, Cahokia Mounds was the largest pre-Columbian city north of Mexico. At its peak around 1100 AD, it was a bustling metropolis home to an estimated 15,000 residents—making it comparable in size to contemporary London. Its crowning achievement, Monks Mound, is a massive 100-foot-tall earthen pyramid built entirely by hand using woven baskets to carry nearly 15 million loads of dirt.
- **Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks (Ohio):** Built roughly 1,600 to 2,000 years ago, these immense geometric earthen walls enclose dozens of acres with mathematical precision. Now recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site, complexes like the Newark Earthworks were built by egalitarian societies and perfectly aligned to track the complex 18.6-year cycle of the moon. Artifacts found here reveal that it was a major pilgrimage site, drawing travelers from as far as Yellowstone (for obsidian) and the Gulf Coast (for marine shells).

The Stone Cities of the Southwest

In the high deserts of the American Southwest, ancestral communities constructed complex masonry architecture that rivaled the castles of medieval Europe.

- **Chaco Canyon (New Mexico):** Chaco Culture National Historical Park preserves the remains of vast multi-story stone complexes known as "Great Houses." The most famous, Pueblo Bonito, featured over 600 rooms and dozens of circular, subterranean ceremonial chambers called kivas. Chaco served as the political and economic hub of the region, linked to outlying communities by an engineered system of wide, straight roads.
- **Mesa Verde (Colorado):** Clinging dramatically to the sheer sandstone walls of canyons, the cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde National Park represent an incredible feat of architectural adaptation. Built by the Ancestral Puebloans between 1190 and 1280 CE, sites like the Cliff Palace contained over 150 rooms and housed entire communities safely sheltered from the elements.

The Legacy Left Behind

These ancient ruins are not just relics of a dead past; they represent the foundations of continuous cultures. While climate shifts like the Little Ice Age or resource strains caused cities like Cahokia and Chaco Canyon to be decentralized by the 14th century, the descendants of these builders—such as the Pueblo, Hopi, Zuni, and Osage nations—retained their traditions, knowledge, and connection to the land.

Madison frowned, tapping her chin with her pencil. She started thinking critically.

If these massive, engineered cities were thriving long before Columbus, she thought, why does public school history always treat 1492 like a giant start button? Why are we taught about European castles and London in the Middle Ages, but we barely mention a city right here in Illinois that was just as big?

She looked across the attic at Cash, who was snoring softly over his own notebook, a gob of drool had formed over the page. "Yuck," she thought, that's gross."

The textbook in front of her proved that the continent she lived in had an advanced, connected past. It wasn't an empty wilderness waiting to be discovered—it was an ancient world waiting to be remembered and she wanted to see if she could connect the thoughts in her mind about America's past to the Bible, once and for all. Her inquisitive mind always took her on the best adventures and this moment was no exception. Madison closed the book with a firm snap. She was going to wake Cash up. They needed to start her adventure now.

The Map in the Attic

Chapter 1: The Question in Central America

Madison watched as Cash stared blankly at their history textbook, his head resting heavily in his hands, still trying to wake up from his mid afternoon nap, while wiping the line of drool on the back of his hand. Outside, a gloomy autumn rain beat against the glass of their grandfather's attic window, but inside, the air was thick with Cash's utter frustration.

"I don't get it," Cash busted out, aggressively tapping the eraser of his pencil against a glossy map of the United States. "Look at Chapter One, Maddy. The book starts 'American history' in 1492 when Christopher Columbus showed up with his three ships. But look at Central and South America on this map! They were already fully populated with massive empires, stone cities, and thousands of years of complete history. And the continents are literally attached by Mexico! How could this huge northern chunk of land just be an empty, blank slate before that?"

Madison paused, looking up from her laptop. Her blue eyes narrowed as she looked over at her younger brother. His strawberry-blond hair was messy from where he had been running his hands through it in frustration. She could see twinkles of moisture on the tips of his hair which had been transferred from the back of his hand, she gagged a little bit at the sight and had to move passed all this drool nonsense, the adventure had to begin!

"You're right, Cash," Madison said, her tone shifting from annoyed to deadly serious. "It wasn't a blank slate at all. The textbook makes it seem like nothing mattered before the Europeans arrived, but the physical geography proves it's impossible. Central America acted as a massive bottleneck and highway. Information, agriculture, and people moved back and forth across that land bridge for thousands of years." She walked over to his desk, flipping the pages of her own worn, dog-eared history book that she had saved from her elementary school days—the one filled with margin notes she had scribbled when she first started questioning things. "Think about the Olmecs in southern Mexico. By 1200 BC, while the ancient Greeks were fighting the Trojan War, the Olmecs were carving colossal 20-ton stone heads, building massive earthen pyramids, and creating the first written writing systems in the

Americas. They cultivated chocolate, invented a complex ritual calendar, and even engineered rubber balls to play team sports!"

"Exactly!" Cash exclaimed, sitting up straight. "And what about the Maya? Their civilization was thriving right next door in Central America during the European Dark Ages. They built towering stone temple-pyramids like Tikal and Copán, mapped the movements of Venus with absolute mathematical precision, and developed a fully written logossyllabic script. They wrote down their entire history, astronomy data, and royal lineages in thousands of bark-paper books called codices."

"But the early Spanish explorers burned almost all of those books," Madison added quietly, her voice laced with anger. "Only four Mayan codices survived the fires. Because those written records were destroyed, early historians tried to pretend that American history didn't exist before 1492. They completely ignored the fact that North America was packed with millions of people who kept their history alive through oral traditions, winter counts, and intricate wampum belts made of white and purple shells."

Cash gestured wildly toward the map. "And if you look at the geography, Mexico is a direct bridge! The Aztec Empire built their capital, Tenochtitlan, right in the middle of Mexico on a lake. It had an estimated 200,000 residents by the early 1500s—making it larger, cleaner, and more advanced than Paris, Madrid, or London at the exact same time! They had floating gardens called *chinampas*, massive aqueducts for fresh water, and public sanitation teams. There's no way that advanced science and culture didn't flow right across the border into North America."

As Cash spoke the words *border into North America*, a strange, low hum vibrated from the desk.

Madison's old book began to glow with a faint, iridescent blue light from within its faded cover. The pages began to flip furiously on their own, generating a small gust of wind that smelled of ancient rainforests, volcanic ash, and rich, wet earth. The flipping stopped abruptly, landing on a vibrant, hand-painted map of Indigenous nations before 1492. The ink on the page began to liquefy and swirl. The borders of the ancient empires didn't stop at modern countries; instead, a glowing network of golden lines webbed across the map, physically connecting

the tip of South America, through the bottleneck of Central America, straight up into the modern-day United States.

"The continents are connected," Madison gasped, leaning over the glowing parchment. "Cash, look at the timeline on the edge of the page. It doesn't say 1492. The dates are counting backward... past the Middle Ages, past the Romans, straight into the centuries following the Old Testament!"

"The portal is locking onto something outside—it's tracking a magnetic field down in the yard!" Cash screamed over the sudden roar of wind inside the small room.

Instinct took over. Madison snatched her glowing old book, and the two siblings flew down the wooden attic stairs, bursting through the backdoor into the cool, pouring rain. Sprinting across the slick grass, they ducked into the open-faced wooden lean-to just as the air pressure dropped to a suffocating vacuum. Cash leaped over a stack of firewood and threw his leg over his customized 110cc dirt bike, gripping the handlebars as if bracing for a massive storm. Madison dove right behind him, wrapping her arms securely around his chest just as the muddy tires began to lift off the ground. The engine hadn't even kicked over, but the glowing vortex caught up to them in a flash, wrapping around the dirt bike's metal frame like a liquid cage of light.

Chapter 2: The Connected Continents

The roaring vortex of golden ink didn't drop them out of the sky this time. Instead, it became a smooth, glowing hyper-highway beneath the spinning tires of Cash's dirt bike.

"Keep your head down, Maddy!" Cash yelled over the electric howl of the timeline. His hands gripped the rubber handlebars of his 110cc bike, knuckles white as he twisted the throttle.

Madison clamped her arms tighter around his waist, burying her face into his jacket. Her blond ponytail whipped wildly in the wind. The engine wasn't running, but the wheels were screaming as they blurred past flashing neon years. The glowing digital numbers on the atlas—strapped securely to Cash's handlebars—flew backward like a broken stopwatch: 1800... 1650... 1500...

"Hold on!" Cash roared as the gold tunnel suddenly shattered like glass.

The front tire slammed down with a violent jerk, catching traction on a hard, level surface. The sudden grip sent a massive jolt up Cash's arms, but his reflexes kicked in. He squeezed the clutch and kicked the engine into life with a loud, mechanical *BRAAAP!* The exhaust note echoed off mountain peaks as Cash slid the rear tire into a perfect, controlled drift, spraying a cloud of dark volcanic dust into the thin air.

When the dust settled, the bike idled with a steady, low rumble. Madison slowly opened her blue eyes and unlocked her arms.

"Where are we?" Cash breathed, keeping one boot firmly on the ground to balance the bike.

They weren't on a dirt trail. They were parked in the dead center of a beautifully engineered, level highway made of massive, tightly fitted polygonal stones that clung to the edge of a jagged cliff.

"Look at the map," Madison whispered, her voice trembling with sheer adrenaline as she leaned over his shoulder. The glowing gold ink on the atlas had locked onto a new destination: **1450 AD**. "Cash, we're still on a highway, but it's thousands of years old. We are in the Andes Mountains of South America. This is the **Qhapaq Ñan—the Great Inca Road**."

Cash gave the throttle a tiny twist, making the dirt bike leap forward a few inches on the ancient stone blocks. "A twenty-five-thousand-mile highway network built right through the mountains? Maddy, your book was right. The continents were already completely connected."

Below them, the stone highway snaked gracefully along the sheer cliffs, crossing deep chasms via massive suspension bridges woven from sturdy ichu grass. The road stretched south as far as the eye could see and ran north toward a bustling valley.

"Cash, this highway system is over 25,000 miles long," Madison explained, her fingers tracing the glowing lines on the atlas. "To put that in perspective, that is long enough to wrap around the entire planet Earth! The Inca Empire built this massive network without iron tools, horses, or the wheel. They engineered retaining walls to prevent landslides, built drainage gutters to stop flooding, and placed *tambos*—which are like ancient highway rest stations with food and supplies—every ten to fifteen miles."

Suddenly, a rhythmic *thump-thump-thump* echoed down the stone

path.

"Someone's coming!" Cash hissed, pulling Madison behind a large boulder.

A young man wearing a vibrant, geometrically patterned wool tunic and sturdy llama-hide sandals sprinted past their hiding spot at a breathtaking speed. He carried a small woven pouch over his shoulder and a set of knotted, multicolored strings called a quipu. He ran with absolute focus, his eyes locked on the trail ahead.

"That's a chasqui," Madison whispered. "An Inca royal runner. They operated like a high-speed human telegraph system. Runners were stationed every few miles along the road. They would sprint at top speed, hand off a message or goods to the next runner, and keep the chain going. This highway allowed messages to travel over 150 miles in a single day across the roughest mountains on earth!"

"Wait, what was that knotted string thing he was holding?" Cash asked. "A quipu," Madison replied. "The Inca didn't use an alphabet. Instead, they used a highly sophisticated system of colored cotton and camelid strings. The type of knot, the color of the string, and the distance between the knots allowed them to record census data, taxes, military supplies, and complete historical records. It was a three-dimensional language."

They watched the runner disappear over a ridge, heading directly toward a massive stone checkpoint.

"Look where the road goes next," Cash pointed out. "It heads straight north, dropping down out of the mountains toward the coast."

"Exactly," Madison said, stepping back onto the stone highway. "And this is the core of your question, Cash. This road network connected directly to the coastal trade routes. Traders from the Inca Empire sailed large balsa-wood rafts up the Pacific Coast, carrying precious *Spondylus* shells—which they valued more than gold—and beautifully woven textiles."

"Where did they take them?" Cash asked.

"To Central America and Mexico!" Madison replied, her blue eyes flashing. "They traded with the Maya and the Aztecs. In exchange, maritime trade networks brought Mexican items—like turquoise, copper bells, and even sacred scarlet macaw birds—all the way down to South America. The continents weren't isolated blocks. They were a massive, living highway system. Mexico wasn't a barrier; it was the ultimate continental intersection where northern and southern knowledge,

engineering, and agriculture collided."

Cash looked down at the stone highway beneath his feet, a huge smile breaking across his face. "So when the peoples of North America were building their cities, they weren't starting from scratch. They were part of a massive, connected web of human history that had been exchanging ideas for thousands of years."

"Precisely," Madison agreed.

As Cash nodded, the raw volcanic dust on his shoes began to shimmer with a faint golden light. The atlas in Madison's arms vibrated, its pages flipping forward to a map of the American Southwest. The second marker on the map began to pulse with a low, deep hum, signaling that the time-travel highway was ready to jump to their next destination.

"Hold on, Cash!" Madison yelled as the stone road beneath them dissolved into a brilliant, swirling river of gold.

The snow-capped peaks of the Andes vanished, and the rushing wind of time swept them away, accelerating north across the continental land bridge toward the high deserts of New Mexico.

Chapter 3: A Way of Life

The golden, rushing river of time slowed to a gentle crawl, depositing Madison and Cash into a sprawling, vibrant valley nestled between the mountains of Mesoamerica. The crisp mountain air of the Andes was replaced by a warm breeze carrying the rich scent of blooming orchids, sweet woodsmoke, and fresh corn.

"Wow," Cash said, stumbling onto a soft grass bank. He blinked against the emerald-green landscape. "The air feels... alive here."

"Because it is," Madison replied, her blue eyes reflecting the sunlit valley below. She checked her old glowing book, which read 1300 AD. "We are right in the heart of the great continental bottleneck. Cash, look at how these people lived. It shatters every single page of our history textbook."

As they walked down from the ridge into a bustling agricultural community, they witnessed a world built on advanced science, brilliant engineering, and deep stewardship of the earth.

SOPHISTICATED SOCIETIES ADVANCED SCIENCE & AG STEWARDSHIP & GOVERNANCE

- Written histories & codices • The "Three Sisters" method • Controlled forest fires
- Vast continental trade loops • Engineered terraforming • Equal democratic councils

Sophisticated Societies

They walked past a large stone plaza where scribes sat on woven mats. The scribes were painting intricate symbols onto long accordion-folded books made of wild fig-tree bark, known as codices.

- Complete Written Histories: "These aren't just doodles," Madison whispered, pointing to the pages. "The Mixtec and Maya peoples used highly advanced logosyllabic and pictographic scripts to document royal lineages, eclipse cycles, and international treaties dating back thousands of years. They had entire libraries before Europeans ever dreamed of crossing the ocean."
- Continental Trade Hubs: In the market center, traders were exchanging goods that had traveled thousands of miles along the continental highway. Cash watched a merchant trade brilliant green quetzal feathers from the southern rainforests for deep blue turquoise mined in the deserts of the American Southwest. "The continents were literally holding hands through trade," Cash realized.

Advanced Science & Agriculture

Further down the valley, the landscape transformed into an architectural masterpiece of farming. Entire mountainsides were carved into massive stone-walled steps.

- Terraforming & Irrigation: "Those are agricultural terraces," Madison explained. "They completely re-engineered the mountains to prevent soil erosion and conserve rainwater. They built complex stone aqueducts and canals that channeled mountain streams directly to individual crops, ensuring a constant food supply even during droughts."
- The Three Sisters: In the fields, farmers were planting corn, beans, and squash together in a single mound—a legendary

method known as the Three Sisters. Madison pointed to the plants: "The corn grows tall to provide a natural trellis for the beans. The beans absorb nitrogen from the air and feed it into the soil to nourish the corn. And the wide, prickly squash leaves blanket the ground, acting as a living mulch that keeps the soil moist and prevents weeds from growing. It's a perfect, self-sustaining ecosystem."

Stewardship and Governance

As the sun began to dip below the horizon, Madison and Cash watched a group of community leaders gather in a circle beneath a massive cedar tree.

- Democratic Councils: "Listen," Cash whispered. Men and women alike were speaking in turns, passing a beautifully carved talking stick. Madison nodded: "Many Indigenous nations, like the Zapotecs and the northern Haudenosaunee, operated under advanced democracies. Decisions weren't made by a tyrannical king; they were made through total consensus, where every clan elder had an equal vote. Women held immense political power, often choosing or removing leaders if they didn't serve the people."
- Living with the Land: In the distance, a controlled, low-burning fire crept safely through the floor of a nearby pine forest. "They aren't destroying the forest," Madison noted. "They use regular, intentional fires to clear out dead brush. This prevents massive, destructive wildfires and allows new, useful plants and berries to grow, creating perfect grazing lands for wild game. They managed the entire continent like a massive, beautiful garden."

Cash looked around the thriving valley, his mind completely blown by the order, intelligence, and peace of the society. "They didn't just survive on the land, Maddy. They perfected it."

As he spoke, the dirt beneath his feet began to shimmer with golden embers. The atlas in Madison's hands vibrated, its pages flipping furiously toward a new set of coordinates located far to the north.

"Get ready, Cash!" Madison yelled as the green valley dissolved into a rushing vortex of starlight and sand, sweeping them forward to the high desert cliffs of their next major stop.

Chapter 4: The True History

The emerald valley of Mesoamerica spun violently into a vortex of rushing gold ink and starlight. Madison and Cash gripped each other's sleeves as the timeline on Madison's book margin rewound like a runaway clock. The dates flew past the colonial era, past the rise of the Aztec empire, plunging deep into the centuries that followed the ancient migrations.

Thump.

They tumbled out of the light and landed flat on a high, windy plateau. The air here was starkly different—dry, thin, and smelling of sun-baked sagebrush and ancient pine.

"Look at the map," Cash gasped, scrambling to his knees. His blue eyes locked onto the glowing parchment in Madison's hands. The shimmering gold text read: *The Great Convergence – 800 AD.*

"We are standing at the ultimate continental crossroads," Madison said, her ponytail whipping in the canyon wind. She pointed toward the horizon. "Look at the paths beneath our feet, Cash. They aren't just footpaths. They are the arteries of a continent."



The Maritime Superhighway

From their high vantage point, they could see the glittering expanse of the Pacific coastline in the distance. Madison explained the incredible

scale of the coastal trade networks.

- The Balsa Fleets: "Long before European caravels sailed the Atlantic, Indigenous merchants navigated the Pacific using massive, ocean-going balsa-wood rafts equipped with complex cotton sails and movable centerboards called *guaras*," Madison explained. "These weren't simple canoes. They were highly stable cargo vessels capable of carrying up to 30 tons of trade goods across thousands of miles of open ocean."
- The Shell Currency: They watched a holographic memory ripple through the landscape, showing traders unloading thousands of spiny, crimson *Spondylus* shells at a coastal port. "The Inca and their predecessors called this the food of the gods," Madison noted. "They mined it off the coast of Ecuador and traded it all the way up into western Mexico in exchange for copper axes, silver bells, and advanced metallurgical techniques. This maritime highway allowed South American metalworking technology to flow directly into the hands of Mexican artisans by 600 AD."

The Overland Network

Turning toward the interior of the continent, Cash pointed to a wide, well-trodden earthen highway that snaked northward through the desert canyons, heading straight toward the modern-day United States.

- The Turquoise Trail: "That is the Turquoise Trail," Madison said, checking the historical data on the atlas. "It connected the high cultures of central Mexico directly to the ancestral communities of the American Southwest. Millions of pieces of sky-blue turquoise were mined from places like Cerrillos, New Mexico, and carried thousands of miles south to decorate the crowns of Mayan kings and Mixtec nobles."
- The Journey of Maize: Cash rubbed his chin, looking at a cluster of wild corn growing near the trail. "So that's how corn got up here?" Madison nodded enthusiastically: "Exactly! Maize was originally domesticated from a wild grass called *teosinte* in southwestern Mexico around 9,000 years ago. It didn't just magically appear in the United States. It was systematically carried northward, adapted, and engineered by thousands of generations of Indigenous farmers traveling along these very

trails, completely transforming the diet and architecture of North America."

The Ultimate Realization

As the golden lines on the map began to pulse with a low, deep vibration, Cash stood at the edge of the plateau, looking at the massive, invisible web that connected the entire Western Hemisphere.

"The history books completely lied to us, Maddy," Cash said, his voice ringing with absolute clarity. "They isolated every culture into tiny, separate boxes. They talked about the Inca like they were stuck in Peru, the Maya like they were trapped in Guatemala, and the ruins in America like they were just random, isolated villages in the woods."

"Because admitting the truth would change everything," Madison replied, her blue eyes shining with the thrill of discovery. "The truth is that the Americas were a unified, vibrant, and deeply connected world. A traveler could start at the tip of South America, walk the stone highways of the Andes, sail the balsa lanes of the Pacific, cross the bottleneck of Mexico, and follow the trade trails straight into the massive earthen cities of Ohio and Illinois."

"And it all points back to an even older story," Cash whispered, looking down at his notebook where he had sketched the timelines matching the ancient post-flood migrations. "The engineering, the paths, the shared memories—they all prove that these people were part of the exact same global human journey."

The book in Madison's arms suddenly erupted with a fierce, blinding column of white light that shot straight into the clouds. The desert plateau began to fracture into shimmering geometric pixels of gold and blue.

Chapter 5: The Great Deluge at Chaco Canyon

Madison and Cash hit the ground hard, gasping for breath. The dusty scent of cedar smoke and dry earth filled their noses.

"Whoa," Cash whispered giggling, wiping sandstone grit from his jeans. "We aren't in Kansas anymore." His sparkling blue eyes amused by his own joke.

They were standing on the absolute edge of a towering cliff—the north rim of Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. The desert sun beat down

mercilessly, but it was the view below that made Madison's jaw drop. Sprawling across the canyon floor was a massive, crescent-shaped stone metropolis. It looked like an ancient fortress or a castle from medieval Europe, built with millions of precisely cut blocks of sandstone.

"Look at the map," Madison urged, checking the glowing atlas in her hands. "We are in the year 1050 AD. This is Pueblo Bonito, the jewel of the Ancestral Puebloan civilization."

"It's huge," Cash muttered, staring at the structure. It was four stories tall and contained over 600 interconnected rooms, flanked by dozens of massive, circular underground chambers. "Those must be the kivas—the underground rooms used for religious ceremonies and community meetings."

Suddenly, a deep, calm voice spoke from behind them. "You stand where the sky meets the earth, young travelers."

Madison and Cash spun around. An elder wrapped in a beautifully woven black-and-white cotton blanket stood near the cliff edge. He wore a necklace of polished sea shells and brilliant blue turquoise mined right from the surrounding hills. His eyes were kind but sharp, looking right through them.

"I am Hano," the elder said, gesturing to the wide, straight paths cutting across the desert floor. "You walk our Great Roads. They stretch for tens of miles in perfectly straight lines, cutting right through cliffs rather than bending around them. Our runners use them to bring parrot feathers from the deep south and obsidian glass from the north."

"We are looking for the true history of this place," Madison said boldly, stepping forward. "Our history books back home say this land was just empty wilderness, but this city took thousands of workers and decades of engineering to build."

Hano nodded slowly. "The books of your time look only at the surface. Come. Let me show you what is carved deeper."

He led them down a steep, hidden hand-and-toe trail carved directly into the cliff face. Cash gripped the rock tightly, his heart pounding as he looked down at the drop. At the base of the canyon, protected by an overhanging ledge, Hano pointed to a massive wall covered in deep rock carvings, or petroglyphs.

Among the symbols of concentric circles, spirals, and solar eclipses, there was a dramatic, jagged sequence of waves swallowing a towering

mountain peak.

"Our ancestors kept the memory of the Great Deluge," Hano said, his voice dropping to a low whisper. "Many generations before our people learned to farm corn in this desert, the entire world was overtaken by a great water. The sky opened, and the rains fell without stopping. The great oceans climbed up the valleys, swallowing the mountains whole." Cash leaned in closer, tracing the carved waves with his finger. "Hano, how did anyone survive?"

"A single family was chosen by the Creator," Hano explained. "They constructed a great vessel of reeds and wood. When the world was drowned, they floated above the peaks. They released a great black bird, a raven, to find if the dry land had returned. When the bird did not come back, they knew the earth was reborn."

Cash looked at Madison, his blue eyes wide with excitement. "Madison! A massive worldwide flood? A chosen family? A giant boat, and sending out a bird to find dry land? That is the exact story of Noah's Ark from the Book of Genesis!"

"It matches perfectly," Madison whispered, her mind racing. "And look at the canyon itself. Geologists back in our time found that these high deserts were once completely carved by massive, rushing water systems. If Noah's descendants split up and traveled across the world after the flood, they would have carried that exact memory across the ancient land bridges and highways into the Americas."

Hano smiled, reaching into a small leather pouch at his side. He pulled out a raw, unpolished nugget of deep blue turquoise, heavy with veins of dark stone. He placed it firmly into Cash's palm.

"Keep the memory of the waters," Hano said. "History is not a line that belongs to one side of the ocean. It is a circle that binds us all."

As Cash's fingers closed around the turquoise, a sudden, blinding flash of golden light erupted from the stone. The first marker on Madison's map flared to life, shifting from a dull gray to a fiery, brilliant gold. The canyon walls began to dissolve around them into a whirlwind of sand and stars.

Chapter 6: The Twelve Tribes at Mesa Verde

The golden vortex spun Madison and Cash through a blinding tunnel of light before dropping them onto a terrifyingly narrow stone ledge. The wind howled through a massive sandstone canyon, sending a chill right through their hoodies.

"Don't move, Cash!" Madison yelled, her back pressed flat against a vertical rock wall.

Cash blinked, his heart hammering against his ribs. He looked down and gasped. They were standing hundreds of feet in the air, perched on a sheer cliffside in Mesa Verde, Colorado. The year on Madison's glowing map read 1220 AD. But it wasn't the drop that took his breath away—it was the impossible city built right into the alcove of the cliff across from them.

"It's the Cliff Palace," Madison whispered, her blue eyes wide with awe. Sheltered beneath a massive overhanging roof of natural sandstone was a sprawling, multi-story metropolis. It looked like an intricate stone hive, packed with over 150 residential rooms, storage structures, and 21 circular underground kivas. People dressed in beautifully woven yucca-fiber sandals and thick cotton robes walked along the rooftops, carrying bundles of brightly colored maize (corn) and hand-coiled pottery painted with sharp, geometric black-and-white lines.

"How did they even build this?" Cash asked, staring at the perfectly square blocks of sandstone held together with thick mud mortar. "They had to carry every single stone up these vertical cliffs without horses or wheels!"

"They used hand-and-toe holds carved right into the rock face," a gentle voice answered.

A woman stepped out from a nearby cliff doorway. She was kneeling on a woven mat, skillfully weaving a basket from thin split-willow branches. Her fingers moved with mathematical precision. Around her neck hung a stunning necklace of polished pipestone and freshwater pearls.

"I am Asdzaan," she said, looking up with a welcoming smile. "You stand in the home of the builders. We live here in the deep canyons to stay safe from the scorching desert sun and the bitter winter winds, farming our crops on the flat mesa tops above us."

Madison stepped carefully along the ledge toward her, the glowing atlas

open. "Asdzaan, we are studying how your people govern this massive city. Back in our time, people think ancient societies were just disorganized groups. But this city looks incredibly organized."

Asdzaan set her basket down and pointed across the canyon to the different sections of the Cliff Palace.

"Our city is built on perfect order," Asdzaan explained. "We are not just one wandering group. We are divided into twelve distinct maternal clans, each representing a different lineage and family line. Look across the plaza. You see how the rooms are grouped into separate blocks? Each block belongs to a clan, with its own sacred kiva for council meetings."

Cash's eyes went wide, and he immediately pulled out his notebook.

"Madison... twelve distinct clans? Operating under one unified system of law in a hidden fortress?"

"Cash, think about the Old Testament," Madison whispered, her mind racing with excitement. "After the Assyrian Empire conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, the Ten Lost Tribes were scattered across the earth. Combined with Judah and Benjamin, there were originally Twelve Tribes of Israel. Historians have spent centuries wondering where they went. What if some of those ancient groups crossed the sea or the northern land bridge, bringing their ancient social structure—the sacred number twelve, the focus on lineage, and the strict laws of community—right here to the cliffs of Colorado?"

Asdzaan watched them, nodding thoughtfully. "Our oldest stories say that our ancestors traveled across great waters and dry deserts from a land far to the east, guided by a pillar of light from the Creator. We keep our twelve lines pure, just as the first grandmothers commanded."

"And look at the architecture," Madison pointed out, gesturing to the circular kivas. "In ancient Israel, religious life revolved around the underground tabernacle spaces and cleansing rituals. The kivas are built completely underground, accessed by a ladder through the roof, symbolizing a return to the earth and communion with the Divine. The spiritual parallels are hiding in plain sight!"

Asdzaan reached into a beautifully painted clay jar beside her. She pulled out a small, intricately woven token made of dried reeds and yucca fibers, dyed in deep shades of crimson and indigo. She handed it to Madison.

"Take this token of the twelve lines," Asdzaan said softly. "Remember that the branches of the human family tree reach much further than your books can see."

The moment Madison's fingers brushed the woven token, it began to hum. A fierce, warm light exploded from the fibers. On the atlas, the second gray marker flared into a brilliant, sparkling gold. The cliff walls of Mesa Verde began to shimmer and dissolve into dust, and the howling canyon wind turned into a rushing roar of time, pulling Madison and Cash forward into their next destination.

Chapter 7: The Mississippian Metropolises (Post-Jesus)

The dry canyon air of Mesa Verde vanished in a suffocating wave of heavy, swampy humidity. The sound of howling desert wind was replaced by a deafening roar of human voices—thousands of people shouting, chanting, and bartering.

Madison and Cash plummeted a few feet, landing hard in a thick patch of clover and rich black soil.

"Ugh, it feels like a sauna out here," Cash groaned, pulling his sweaty hoodie over his head. He looked down at his sneakers, which were already caked in dark mud. "Where are we? Florida?"

Madison sat up, checking the glowing atlas. The gold light was pulsing violently against the parchment. "Not Florida. The map says we are in the year 1100 AD, just east of modern-day St. Louis. Cash, look up. We made it to Cahokia."

Rising directly in front of them was an absolutely monstrous mountain of earth. It wasn't a natural hill; it was a perfectly sculpted, multi-tiered earthen pyramid that loomed over the landscape like a mountain.

"That is Monks Mound," Madison whispered, her blue eyes wide as she took in the sheer scale of it. "It's over 100 feet tall, 1,000 feet long, and covers 14 acres at its base. That makes it larger at its base than the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt! And every single ounce of that dirt was carried by human beings using hand-woven backpacks and baskets. It took nearly 15 million basket loads of earth to build."

As they stood in the shadows of the giant pyramid, they realized they were in the middle of a sprawling, sophisticated metropolis. A massive wood-plank palisade wall—over two miles long with defensive guard

towers every few feet—encircled the grand central plaza. Outside the walls, thousands of thatched-roof houses stretched across the fertile Mississippi River floodplains as far as the eye could see.

"This is incredible," Cash muttered, dodging a group of men carrying long wooden poles. "There are people everywhere!"

"At its peak right now, Cahokia has between 15,000 and 20,000 residents," Madison explained, pulling out her historical notes. "To put that in perspective, this American city is larger than London or Paris at this exact same time in history! This is the peak of the Mississippian culture, thriving during the European Middle Ages."

They walked into the bustling grand plaza, where a vibrant trade market was underway. Traders from all corners of the continent were laid out on woven mats:

- From the West: Glittering volcanic obsidian glass from the Yellowstone region.
- From the North: Chunks of raw, pure native copper mined near Lake Superior.
- From the South: Brilliant tropical bird feathers and sea shells from the Gulf of Mexico.

"They had a continental trade highway system," Cash realized, watching a craftsman hammer a sheet of glowing orange copper.

"Look at what he's making," Madison whispered, nudging her brother.

They stepped closer to the copper artisan's workshop. The craftsman was using bone tools to emboss intricate designs onto a polished copper plate. Madison gasped as she recognized the religious symbols. Stamped into the metal were distinct crosses, representations of a heavenly realm, a falcon-headed winged savior figure, and a sacred eye symbol engraved directly inside the palm of an outstretched hand.

An older man wearing a magnificent feather cape and a copper crown stepped out from the temple at the base of the mound. His face was painted with intricate lines tracing the sockets of his eyes, mimicking a falcon.

"You marvel at the signs of the heavens," the leader said, his voice deep and commanding. "I am Tula, the sun chief of this plaza. We engrave these symbols to remind our people of the Great Spirit, the Lord of Life who rules the Upper World, conquered the forces of death, and commands us to live in peace and charity."

Madison felt a shiver run down her spine. She pulled Cash aside. "Cash, look at the timeline. It is 1100 AD—centuries *after* Jesus lived and taught

in Jerusalem. After the resurrection of Jesus, the New Testament says his apostles and disciples went to the absolute ends of the earth to spread his message. Historians always assumed they only went east into Asia or west into Europe."

"But what if they built ships or crossed the oceans?" Cash asked, his blue eyes flashing with the thrill of the discovery. "A single Creator? A winged savior who conquered death? The symbol of the cross, and a sacred hand with an eye in it—which looks just like the ancient Middle Eastern *Hamsa* or the hand symbols used by early Christians? The timing and the spiritual ideas match up perfectly with the spread of post-Jesus history across the globe!"

"Exactly," Madison agreed. "The Mississippian people weren't isolated. They were developing advanced metalwork, building monumental temples, and practicing a faith that shared deep, undeniable roots with the post-Christian world across the sea."

Tula walked over to them, holding a small, heavy fragment of unrefined native copper, stamped with the sacred cross and hand symbol. He placed it into Cash's open palm.

"Hold fast to the symbols of the Upper World," Tula said with a majestic nod. "The truth of the Creator is written in the metal and the earth, waiting for those with eyes to see."

The moment Cash's fingers clenched around the cool copper plate, it erupted in a dazzling explosion of orange and golden sparks. On Madison's atlas, the third gray marker flared into a blinding, radiant gold. The colossal earthen pyramid, the bustling market, and the wooden fortresses of Cahokia began to spin and dissolve into a rushing river of golden light, sweeping Madison and Cash away to their final destination.

Chapter 8: The Cosmic Calendar at Hopewell

The swampy heat and deafening noise of the Cahokia market dissolved into a crisp, silent autumn night. Madison and Cash dropped out of the golden vortex, landing softly on a vast sea of dark, dew-kissed grass.

"Wow," Cash breathed, shivering as the chilly night air hit his face. "Look at the stars."

Without city lights or pollution, the night sky was an absolute masterpiece. The Milky Way stretched across the heavens like a glowing cosmic river. Madison opened the atlas, her blue eyes reflecting the faint shimmer of the parchment. The map read 250 AD, and they were standing in the heart of what would one day be Newark, Ohio.

"We are at the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks," Madison whispered, pointing out into the darkness.

As their eyes adjusted, they realized they weren't just standing in an open field. They were inside a colossal, engineered complex.

Surrounding them were massive earthen walls—perfectly sculpted embankments of dirt standing nearly ten feet high. These walls formed incredibly precise, gigantic geometric shapes.

"Cash, look at the scale of this place," Madison said, checking her notes. "This single complex connects a perfect circle that spans 20 acres to a massive, symmetrical octagon covering 50 acres



. It's so big that four modern football fields could easily fit inside just one section of it! And the engineering is flawless—the builders used complex geometry to make sure the shapes perfectly mirror each other across hundreds of yards."

Suddenly, the silent night was broken by the soft, rhythmic thrumming of a deer-hide drum. Out of the shadows of the earthen walls walked a massive gathering of people. They wore beautifully draped cloaks made

of woven plant fibers and animal furs. Many wore copper ear spools that caught the starlight, and their leaders bore elaborate headdresses fashioned from polished deer antlers and freshwater pearls.

An elder holding a long wooden staff tipped with a crescent moon made of glittering black obsidian glass stepped forward.

"You stand within the Great Octagon," the elder said warmly. "I am Ohan. You have arrived on the night of the Great Alignment."

"What are you all waiting for?" Cash asked, looking around at the thousands of travelers who had gathered quietly inside the earthen walls.

Ohan pointed his obsidian staff toward a wide opening in the western earthen wall—a structure known as the golden gate. "We are waiting for the moon. Our ancestors built these walls not just as a fort, but as a clock for the cosmos. The sun changes its path every year, but the moon is a wilder spirit. It takes 18.6 years to complete its full journey, dancing from its furthest northern rising point to its furthest southern point."

Madison's jaw dropped as she did the math in her head. "An 18.6-year lunar cycle? Cash, that requires advanced, multi-generational mathematics and astronomy! Western modern astronomers didn't fully map that cycle out until centuries later! The people who built this weren't primitive; they were brilliant scientists."

Right at that moment, the drumbeat stopped. A collective gasp echoed through the crowd.

The edge of a massive, luminous full moon began to peek over the horizon. Madison and Cash watched in absolute awe as the moon rose perfectly, mathematically centered right in the middle of the golden gate opening of the octagon walls. The moonlight flooded the entire complex, turning the dark grass into a sheet of silver.

"It's a perfect alignment," Cash whispered, totally spellbound.

"Look at the artifacts the travelers are carrying," Madison noted, looking at the mats laid out near the earthen walls. She saw glittering chunks of mica sheets from the Appalachian Mountains, shark teeth and barracuda jaws from the Atlantic Coast, and obsidian weapons from Yellowstone.

"People traveled from thousands of miles away—from the ocean to the rocky mountains—just to be here for this exact night."

Ohan looked up at the moon and spoke softly. "The Creator placed the great lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night. They are given to us for signs, for seasons, for days, and for

years. We build these earthworks to honor that divine clock."

Madison grabbed Cash's arm, her voice trembling with excitement.

"Cash! Did you hear what he just said? '*Signs, seasons, days, and years*'—that is the exact phrasing from Genesis chapter one in the Bible describing why God created the sun and the moon! In the Old Testament, the ancient Israelites used a strict lunar calendar to track their holy days and years, building their entire society around the movements of the cosmos."

"It connects all the way back," Cash realized, his blue eyes flashing in the moonlight. "The ancient people who traveled across the continents carried that exact biblical understanding of the universe with them. They built these massive, mathematically perfect earthworks to fulfill the exact purpose of the cosmos written in Genesis!"

Ohan smiled and reached out his hand. He placed a heavy, razor-sharp piece of black obsidian glass, carved into the shape of a crescent moon, into Cash's palm.

"You have seen the clock of the Creator," Ohan said. "Go forward, and tell the world that our history was never empty."

The moment the obsidian touched Cash's hand, the silver moonlight flamed into a brilliant, swirling vortex of pure gold. On Madison's atlas, the fourth and final gray marker flared into a magnificent, blinding light. The giant octagon walls, the starlit sky, and the ancient astronomers of Hopewell vanished into a roaring tunnel of light, throwing Madison and Cash through the currents of time one last time, heading straight back toward the attic.



Chapter 9: Connecting the Pieces

Thud.

Madison and Cash slammed onto the hard wooden floorboards of their grandfather's attic, gasping for breath. The swirling golden vortex snapped shut like a rubber band, leaving behind a dead silence broken only by the steady patter of rain against the roof window. The smell of ancient ozone slowly faded, replaced by the familiar scent of old dust and cardboard boxes.

"Are we... back?" Cash wheezed, sitting up and checking his arms to make sure he was still in one piece. He ran a hand through his strawberry-blond hair, shaking loose a stray blade of 1,800-year-old Ohio grass.

"We're back," Madison breathed. Her blue eyes were wide with a mixture of exhaustion and pure adrenaline.

She looked down at her grandfather's dusty desk. Resting there wasn't just Madison's social studies textbook, but a massive, heavy volume they hadn't noticed before—an old, leather-bound world atlas belonging to their grandfather, its spine cracked and its corners worn down by

decades of handling.

The atlas lay completely closed, its pages no longer humming. But it wasn't empty. Resting in a perfect circle on top of the ancient leather cover were the four artifacts they had collected across time:

- The raw blue turquoise nugget from the hidden cliff trails of Chaco Canyon.
- The crimson-and-indigo woven reed token from the matriarchs of Mesa Verde.
- The heavy plate of native copper embossed with a cross and a hand from Cahokia.
- The razor-sharp crescent of black obsidian glass from the lunar observatory at Hopewell.

"Maddy, look," Cash whispered, pointing at the artifacts.

A faint, residual geometric line of gold light pulsed between the objects, connecting them like a constellation. As they watched, the gold light bled downward, sinking directly into the leather cover of the atlas. The heavy book suddenly groaned, its iron clasps popping open on their own as the pages began to flip violently back and forth, finally landing open on a beautifully detailed, hand-drawn map of the ancient Americas.

Madison pulled her old reference book over, flipping through her notes.

"Cash, grab your notebook. Look at the atlas—grandfather's map already has these coordinates marked. We need to lay out the evidence before the portal's energy completely fades. If we're going to prove that American history didn't start as an empty slate in 1492, we have to map out how these four exact locations connect the facts in my book to global biblical history and the world after Jesus."

She grabbed a black marker and drew a large timeline across a blank sheet of poster board, pinning their evidence directly to the coordinates glowing on the atlas page.

Evidence 1: The Great Flood at Chaco Canyon (Ante-1492)

"First stop, Chaco Canyon, 1050 AD," Cash said, tapping the turquoise nugget, which sat precisely over a faint ink rendering of the American Southwest on the atlas page. "Hano showed us petroglyphs recording a global deluge—a chosen family, a wooden vessel, and a raven sent out to find dry land. That is a carbon copy of Noah's Ark in Genesis 6-8."

- **The Historical Fact:** "Mainstream textbooks call these 'indigenous geomyths,'" Madison noted, typing furiously on her laptop to cross-reference data with the notes in her book. "But

anthropologists have documented more than 250 distinct flood traditions across almost every single Native American culture, from the Hualapai and Choctaw to the Aztecs and Incas. Grandfather's atlas actually traces the ancient migration routes through Mexico. When the continents were physically attached, the early migrating populations carried this core human memory of the Great Flood with them, weaving it into the very geography of the American Southwest."

Evidence 2: The Twelve Tribes at Mesa Verde (1220 AD)

Madison picked up the woven reed token and placed it on the atlas's topography of southwestern Colorado. "Second stop, Mesa Verde. Asdzaan explicitly told us the Cliff Palace was engineered to house twelve distinct maternal clans, operating under a unified council."

- **The Historical Fact:** "Think about the timing," Madison explained, her eyes flashing as she pointed to a handwritten marginal note in the atlas referencing ancient Hebrew script. "Around 722 BC, the Assyrian Empire conquered Israel and scattered the Ten Lost Tribes to the corners of the earth. Combined with the remaining tribes, the biblical narrative is built entirely on the foundation of twelve lines. For centuries, explorers like James Adair in his 1775 book *History of the American Indians* noted startling cultural similarities between Indigenous groups and ancient Hebrew traditions—including language roots, strict lineage tracking, and underground ceremonial spaces like the kivas that mirror ancient purification tabernacles. They brought the sacred societal structure of the twelve tribes across the sea, and Grandfather's atlas has the nautical trade winds mapped out right here."

Evidence 3: Post-Jesus Civilization at Cahokia (1100 AD)

Cash carefully picked up the heavy copper plate, running his thumb over the engraved cross and the hand with an eye in the palm, placing it over the Mississippi River Valley section of the atlas. "Third stop, Cahokia, 1100 AD. A city larger than contemporary London, right in the American Midwest."

- **The Historical Fact:** "This completely shatters the 'primitive wilderness' lie," Madison said, writing down the numbers.

"Cahokia had an advanced copper-smithing network stretching from Lake Superior to the Gulf Coast. More importantly, the Mississippian Iconographic Interaction Sphere (MIIIS) is filled with symbols that perfectly align with the era after Jesus lived. The New Testament claims the Apostles traveled to the 'uttermost parts of the earth.' Centuries later, we find American civilizations building massive temple mounds shaped like pyramids, using the symbol of the cross, and revering a falcon-headed savior figure who conquered death and rules the Upper World. The timing and theological themes strongly suggest that the message of post-Jesus history crossed the oceans far earlier than mainstream history admits."

Evidence 4: The Cosmic Clock at Hopewell (250 AD)

Finally, Cash laid down the gleaming black obsidian crescent onto the Ohio River Valley markings. "Hopewell, Ohio, 250 AD. The Great Octagon and Circle earthworks."

- **The Historical Fact:** "The builders used advanced geometry to track the 18.6-year major lunar standstill cycle," Madison marveled, matching the geometric lines flashing from the artifact to a celestial overlay printed in the back of the old atlas. "Modern science didn't fully grasp the complexity of this lunar movement until much later, yet the Hopewell cultures engineered a 50-acre cosmic clock to track it perfectly. Genesis 1:14 states that God created the lights in the sky 'for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.' The Hopewell earthworks were a massive pilgrimage site where travelers brought obsidian from Yellowstone and mica from the Appalachians, proving they built their entire continental society around a deep, biblical understanding of the cosmic calendar."

Just as Madison wrote down the final conclusion, the four artifacts suddenly flared with a brilliant, blinding white light. The geometric lines of gold connecting them shot upward from the pages of the open atlas, projecting a glowing map of the United States onto the attic ceiling. The four isolated sites—Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, Cahokia, and Hopewell—were now clearly linked by a massive, glowing golden

highway that ran straight down through Mexico and into South America, perfectly mirroring the faded ink trade routes detailed in their grandfather's book.

"The Secret Highway," Cash whispered in absolute awe. "Grandfather knew. It's a complete, unbroken chain of history."

The front door of the house downstairs slammed open, and the heavy footsteps of their grandfather echoed up the stairwell. "Madison? Cash?" their grandfather called out. "Are you kids up there? Dinner's ready!"

With a soft hiss, the projection faded, the atlas snapped shut with a heavy *thud*, and the artifacts returned to normal stone, copper, and glass.

Madison looked at Cash, a knowing smile spreading across her face. They quickly packed the artifacts into Cash's backpack, slid the poster board under the desk, and left the ancient atlas right where it belonged. "We have the proof, Cash," Madison said, her voice filled with quiet confidence as they headed for the stairs. "Tomorrow in history class, Chapter One is getting a major rewrite."