

Treasures

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Expedition Guide

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Margaret Mead



[Download archival footage of Margaret Mead:](#)

[Robert Carneiro, Curator at the Museum, discussing Margaret Mead's focus on individuals in the study of culture. \(.mov format, 3.1 mb\)](#)

[David Hurst Thomas, also a Curator at the Museum, discusses Margaret Mead's innovative use of longitudinal field study. \(.mov format, 3.4 mb\)](#)

[Margaret Mead, in the newly constructed Hall of Pacific Peoples at the American Museum of Natural History. \(.mov format, 3.0 mb\)](#)

Margaret Mead (1901-78) taught generations of Americans about the value of looking carefully and openly at other cultures to better understand the complexities of being human. Scientist, explorer, writer, and teacher, Mead, who worked in the Department of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History from 1926 until her death, brought the serious work of anthropology into the public consciousness.

Mead studied at Barnard College, where she met the great anthropologist Franz Boas, who became her mentor and her advisor when she attended graduate school at Columbia University. She was twenty-three years old when she first traveled to the South Pacific, to conduct research for her doctoral dissertation. The resulting book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, was -- and remains -- a best-seller. She continued her research throughout her life in such locations as New Guinea, Samoa, Bali, and many other places, including contemporary North America. Mead's work is largely responsible for the treasures on view in the Museum's Hall of Pacific Peoples.

In addition to her work at the Museum, Margaret Mead taught, wrote more best-selling books, contributed a regular column to *Redbook* magazine, lectured, and was frequently interviewed on radio and television. A deeply committed activist, Mead often testified on social issues before the United States Congress and other government agencies. She hoped that through all of these efforts others would learn about themselves and work toward a more humane and socially responsible society. As she once said, "I have spent most of my life studying the lives of other peoples -- faraway peoples -- so that Americans might better understand themselves."

