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This lesson was created by a teacher participating in a Wisconsin ESEA Improving Teacher Quality grant entitled Inquiry Based Technology-Mediated Teacher Professional Development and Application.

Title: Artifact Adventure

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Grade Level: 3-5

Subjects: Social Studies, Science, Language Arts

Objectives: Goal: To understand how archaeologists study the past.
Students will be able to:
1. Define basic archaeological terms
2. Make general inferences and observations; and
3. Explain the importance of context.

WI Standards: -English A.4.1, A.4.3, B.4.1, C.4.1, C.4.3, D.4.2, F.4.1
-Science A.4.1, A.4.2, A.4.3, C.4.1, C.4.2, C.4.5, C.4.7
-Social Studies B.4.1, B.4.4, B.4.9, E.4.9

Duration: Two 60 to 90 minute class periods

Materials/Supplies: Five bags filled with artifacts or pictures of artifacts from five different sites around school, home, and any areas children are familiar with. Examples include 1. bedroom, 2. kitchen, 3. classroom, 4. playground, 5. living room, 6. library, 7. cafeteria, 8. gymnasium, 9. bathroom
Note: Make sure the artifacts are safe trash. i.e., no food, cans, or glass.

Vocabulary: -Archaeology - the scientific study of past human cultures by analyses of the sites and artifacts that people leave behind.
-Archaeological site - a place where human activities occurred and material remains were left behind.
-Artifact - any object made, used by humans.
-Context - the relationship artifacts have to each other and the situation in which they are found.

-Culture - a set of learned beliefs, behaviors, and values that are shared by members of a society.

-Hypothesis - a proposed explanation accounting for a set of facts that can be tested by further investigation.

-Inference - a conclusion derived from observations.

-Observation - recognizing or noting a fact or occurrence.

Background: Archaeology is the scientific study of past human cultures by analyses of the sites and artifacts that people leave behind. It is not enough to just find artifacts, but one must also ask the questions, “What can we learn from these artifacts?” and “How do the artifacts help explain what and why things happened?” Once a site is uncovered all the artifacts must be kept in context in order for the artifacts to be analyzed and interpreted. This interpretation helps to paint a picture of what the past may have been like.

Setting the Stage:

1. Ask the students to take five objects (artifacts) from their desks. Ask the students to explain what the object is, and what the object could be used for. List all the possible answers on the board or on chart paper in the following format:
Object | Describe the object | What it was used for? (function)
2. Lead a discussion on what all the objects have in common. Then lead the students into a discussion on how we can tell a story about the people that used these artifacts. Use the terms listed above so that students can become familiar with them.

Procedure: Divide students into cooperative learning groups of four to five students per group. Give each group a bag of artifacts from one of the five sites. Have the students assume the role of the archaeologists who must analyze the contents to determine from which location the artifacts came from. They must also make inferences about the people who left the artifacts behind. Use the activity sheet (Sheet One: Artifacts around Us) to help students with their analysis and conclusions. The students will then use the activity sheet (Sheet Two: Archaeologist Report) to help students make conclusions about their site and prepare for the oral report each group will be giving.

Closure: Each group will give their report on the type of archaeological site they have analyzed using the activity sheet Archaeologist Report. Then have a class discussion on what was observed using the artifacts, what hypothesis they came up with, and how they used their observation skills and made inference about what type of site the artifacts came from.

Evaluation: Collect the students’ activity sheets and evaluate the reports and discussion answers given.

Links/Extension:

1. This lesson could be linked to Section One, Lessons 1- 8 in Intrigue of the Past. This would be a good activity to introduce students to the idea of how to analyze and make inferences about what cultures were like. The students could use this knowledge when being introduced to other lessons about past cultures.
2. This lesson could be extended in the following ways: Have the students bring in their own artifacts making sure the artifacts are kept in context. Students could then exchange bags and make a list of the contents. Next to each recorded item the student should write down a possible inference about the household from which it came from. For example: Contents: An empty bag of dog food. Inference: The family has a pet dog.
3. This activity could also be extended in art. The students can draw a picture of the site that the artifacts may have come from.
4. This activity could also be used as an introduction to a study on various cultures that are going to be studied throughout the year.

References:

Staeck, John P., 2002, Back to the Earth: An Introduction to Archaeology. Mayfield Publishing Company, Mountain View, CA. The first chapter gives good background information on what archaeology is and what the goals of archaeology are.

Group number _____

Artifact bag number _____

**Artifacts around Us
Sheet One**

Object	Describe the Object	What it was used for? (function)

Group number _____

Artifact bag number _____

**Archaeologist Report
Sheet Two**

- 1. Who were the people who left behind the artifacts? List two or more inferences you can make about the people who left behind the artifacts.**

- 2. What can we learn about their activities, lifestyles, diet, hobbies, etc.?**

- 3. Are there any special events such as a birthday or holiday represented in the artifact assemblage? What mistakes might archaeologists make about the people if they only studied the artifacts from those special events?**

- 4. Where is your site located? _____**

- 5. What observations led you to hypothesize and bring you to your conclusions?**

- 6. How would your conclusions about the artifacts change if the individual bags were all mixed together?**

- 7. How did you know that these artifacts came from an American culture and not a different culture?**

- 8. Does your study of the artifacts tell you everything about American society?**

9. Define the following terms.

- **Archaeology:**

- **Archaeological site:**

- **Artifact:**

- **Context:**

- **Culture:**

- **Hypothesis:**

- **Inference:**

- **Observation:**
