



Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center
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The following lessons were created by Kate Olson, a teacher participating in a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for Teachers entitled Touch the Past: Archaeology of the Upper Mississippi River Region.

Pre-European cultures of the Upper Mississippi River Valley

Objective: Students will be able to identify the prehistoric periods of the Upper Mississippi River Valley by investigating four kits of artifacts/picture collections and placing them in sequential order based on the applied technology and available natural resources in each period.

Kit #1 (Paleo-Indian)

Points—clovis/folsom(fluted) and long non-fluted lanceolate
Atlatl and spear use in hunting
Glacial climate, retreating glaciers
Mammoths, mastodons, caribou, giant beaver, elk, moose
Stone tools—hammerstone, large scrapers, drill, knife

Kit #2 (Archaic)

Points—long and notched, some Hardin barbed
Stone tools—hammerstone, axe chopper head, drill, nutting stone
Copper, red ocher
Bone tools
Warmer and drier climate/more prairie
Turkey, bison, deer, elk
Berries, hickory nuts, walnuts, small gourds

Kit #3 (Woodland)

Points—notched, serrated edges
Spear (early and middle)
Bow and arrow (late)
Stone tools—hammerstones, obsidian flakes (with Hopewell), knives, drills, chopping tools, celts
Gourds, small ears of corn
Climate—warm/deciduous vegetation
Migrating birds, raccoon, beaver, deer
Sunflower seeds, berries, nuts, wild rice
Wetland resources—fish, turtle shell, clam shells, duck, lots of mussel shells

Mounds/burials/effigy mounds
Grit-tempered decorative pottery (cord impressions)

Kit #4 (Oneota)

Lots of corn, several varieties of beans, squash seeds
Wild rice, walnuts
Berries, sumac
Stone chopper, lots of end scrapers
Gourd bowl, turtle shell
Bison scapula hoe, deer jaw bones, antler projectile tips, cane needles
Climate—moist/green
Large shell-tempered pottery with decorative edging
Turkey, bison, fish, migrating birds, clam shells, crayfish
Bow & arrow
Points—small/triangular