

Modern Artifacts

Adapted from *Can You Dig It? A Classroom Guide to South Carolina Archaeology* produced by the SC Department of Education and the SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

Time: 60 minutes for activity and discussion

SC Education Standards:

- Science: 1.S.1A.1-8; 2.S.1A.1-8; 3.S.1A.1-8; 4.S.1A.1-8; 5.S.1A.1-8; 6.S.1A.1-8; 7.S.1A.1-8; 8.S.1A.1-8
- English Language Arts:
 - Grade 1:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5
 - Grade 2:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1, 2.2
 - Grade 3:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.4
 - Grade 4:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5; 2.1
 - Grade 5:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1, 4.1
 - Grade 6:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 4.1
 - Grade 7:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 4.1
 - Grade 8:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 4.1

Materials

For each student:

- Modern objects (i.e. coins, flash drives, kitchen utensils, figurines, etc.) enough for each student in the class to have their own. Each needs to be labeled with a number. (These items can be brought in by students from home or provided by the teachers)
- Rulers
- Scale (if describing weight)

Introduction

Detailed descriptions of archaeological sites and artifacts are important during an excavation. Sometimes archaeologists are not sure what an artifact was used for. A good description of the artifact's attributes helps others understand what was found and can help with developing an educated guess as to the function of the object.

Activity Steps

1. Create a master list of what number is associated with which object.
2. Tell the students to pretend they are archaeologists from the future. They are back in the lab after an excavation and are analyzing the artifacts that were found. They unfortunately know very little about the civilization that created these artifacts, so they must use their deductive reasoning to hypothesize what they may have been used for.
3. Divide students into small groups give each student an artifact.
4. Have each student select an artifact, write down the number, and write a detailed description based on the appearance of the artifact. Examples:
 - a. Color
 - b. Shape
 - c. Size
 - d. Smell
 - e. Weight
 - f. Material
5. After writing a description of their object have students give the object a function. Remind them they have very little knowledge of what life was like in the 21st century. The conclusions they draw about these artifacts should be logical and based on their descriptions. They do not necessarily have to be true. For example, artifact #10 could be a record and the conclusion students draw is that it was used as a recreation device to throw between two people or as a wheel on a cart. Tell students to be creative without being silly.
6. When students have finished with their first object they should trade within their group and do the same thing with the next object.
7. Within their group, have students discuss their conclusions about the culture that left these artifacts behind.

Lead a class discussion about the activity. Have each group present their objects and the story they came up with about the culture that left them behind. How were other's observations and inferences similar? How were they different, and why? What did they learn about how archaeologists draw conclusions from the artifacts they find? How was this activity similar to what archaeologists do in real life? (Students describe the appearance of the artifacts, their hypothesized function, and what it showed about the culture) How is it different? (archaeologists usually have more artifacts to look at; they compare findings from other sites; they also look at features and the landscape of the site; know the context of the artifacts).