

Newspaper Archaeology

Time: 45-60 minutes for activity and discussion

South Carolina Education Standards:

- Social Studies: Standards covered depends on time periods reviewed through activity. Se activity steps for details.
- 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - Writing: 3.1, 3.2
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1, 2.2
 - Grade 2:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading Informational Text: 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - Writing: 3.1, 3.2
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - Writing: 3.1
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 6.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - Writing: 3.1
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - Writing: 3.1
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 7.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - Writing: 3.1
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - Writing: 3.1
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - Writing: 3.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 4.1

Materials needed:

For each student/group:

- Newspapers/articles past, specifically classified ads or advertisements – can be matched with whatever historical unit is being currently studied, or a broad range of dates. Old newspapers available from:
 - School’s database collection
 - Local library’s database collection
 - Chronicling America: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- Modern newspaper classified ads and advertising pages
- A piece of paper and pencil

Introduction:

Students often learn about the history’s major events, but sometimes lack the understanding of local experiences. Archaeological sites and their associated artifacts are directly linked to people who lived during the past and can tell researchers a great many things about local experiences. Primary sources such as newspapers are a printed version of archaeological artifacts. They give researchers a direct connection to the historical events and daily lives and allow them to make interpretations about the past. Students will use this exercise to improve their logic and analytical skills and understand how archaeologists learn about the past through items from that time period.

Activity Steps:

(Note: the teacher will want to print copies of the historical newspapers, or have a few pages available for the students to research on a smart board, laptops, or tablets.)

1. Discuss with students that archaeologist study artifacts – anything used or made by people - to understand the past. These artifacts can tell a great deal of information about a culture and their technological developments.
2. If focusing on a particular time period, discuss with the students what was happening people’s daily lives during this period in history. How did people usually dress? How did they cook and eat? What did children do? If this activity is being done in a more broad manner, discuss with students how these topics may have changed through history and what artifacts might represent these changes
3. Talk to the students about the difference between a primary and secondary source. What are some examples of primary sources? (artifacts, diaries, newspapers, photos) What are examples of secondary sources? (history books, papers written by researchers, documentaries) Discuss the importance of primary sources in research.
4. Let students know that today they will be doing newspaper archaeology – looking for written information or pictures of artifacts instead of working with the physical artifacts themselves.

5. Show the students an example of modern newspaper advertisements and classified ads. Talk about what these examples tell us about life today – how much do things cost? How are they advertised? What sorts of things are being sold or talked about?
6. Show an example of a historical newspaper. Talk about how these examples are similar or different from the modern day newspapers.
7. Distribute the newspaper articles among the groups of students.
8. Have students read through/observe their sources and talk among their groups about what these sources tell them about family life. Be sure they know that they do not need to read or understand every word on the page – just get a general idea of what is being talked about/sold in a few different ads.
9. What do the advertisements in the historical newspapers tell about everyday life in the past? What was available for people to buy? What were prices like?
10. Once they have completed their reading/observation, have students choose at least three ads from the newspapers distributed. Students will write their own diary entry or letter from the point of view of an everyday person and incorporate information from their three ads within their writing.

After students complete their writing assignment, have a class discussion about the activity. What did they learn from the sources that may have been different from what they read about in their history books? Have they ever thought about the individual people who lived and worked during these periods in history? Why is it important for us to think of these things? (It puts a more personal face on history and helps us remember that the past was not just an event in a history book).