

What Gets Preserved?

Adapted from lesson plan from George Schneider, B.A., M.A. (Anthropology), Elementary Teacher submitted to the SAA website

Time: 45 minutes

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
 - Reading Informational Text: 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 6.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 7.1, 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - 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
 - Reading Informational Text: 8.1, 8.2; 12.1-3
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 4.1

Materials Needed:

- Materials to be analyzed: wood, stone, cloth, fiber, plants, and bone (pictures of these items can be used)
- Paper
- Pencil
- Film, video, slides, pictures, or books on particular subject area culture. This is matter of teacher discretion and can fit within any lesson on past or present cultures.

This activity is designed to help students learn about the types of items from the culture under study that would be preserved in the archaeological record. After examining the culture chosen by the instructor, students will examine a set of “artifacts” related to the media chosen and then examine which artifacts are most likely to be preserved.

Introduction:

Not everything that people use is found in the archaeological record. Some materials have better preservation than others and is related to the materials the artifacts are made from. Knowing what information is likely to be found in the archaeological record can help archaeologists understand the nature and overall assemblage of a particular site.

Activity Steps:

1. Show the class the Film, video, slides, pictures, or books on particular subject area culture.
2. Have the students concentrate on the materials that make up the dwellings and artifacts of the culture during examination by asking this question:
 - a. What kinds of plants and animals do they see?
3. Move around the room, monitoring the students as they make out their lists and commenting on anything they may have missed.
4. After the students lists are completed pose these questions to the students:
 - a. What parts of these plants and animals would leave traces centuries later?
 - b. What if the soil is acidic or has calcium carbonate in it.
5. Have the students finish by writing a narrative about what items in their list would be preserved in the archaeological record, which would not, and why.

This activity can be combined with a recycling project. Visit a recycling plant and the local landfill, research which kinds of things get preserved and why.