**Archaeology**

**Grade Level**

4-6

**Introduction**

Archeologists are anthropologists, meaning they study people, but they are not geologists (who study rocks and minerals) or paleontologists (who study very ancient reptiles). Archeologists look at old things and sites to investigate how people lived in the past.

Archeologists are a hardy bunch. They dig everywhere, including in old garbage piles and toilets. They seem to know something about everything people in the past did: how they made tools, why they moved around, and what kinds of foods they ate.

There are many different branches of archeology. The first type is field crews, this is the team that excavates or digs the site. The field crew consists of collection specialists. Collection specialists take care of excavation records and artifacts. These team members work everywhere archeological collections go, including museums, historical societies, colleges and universities, and parks. The team also consists of, Zooarcheologists work with animals and archaeology. These scientists study animal remains, or fauna, from archeological sites. Their work shows what people ate, the animals they hunted and raised, and about their health. Underwater archaeologists use scuba diving and archaeology. Next we have, Underwater archeologists use similar methods as landlubbing archeologists. They excavate everything from rock shelters to abandoned ships to airplanes. Their work tells us about seafaring life and culture, such as war or the cargo carried for trade on shipwrecks. Another branch of archaeology, Historical Archaeologists, work with history and archaeology. If you like to read family records, diaries, letters and maps, historical archeology might be for you. Historical archeologists compare documentary sources with what they find at sites. Sometimes they find the actual events or artifacts described in the texts hidden in the ground. Then we have, Environmental archaeologists, these archaeologists study nature and archaeology. Environmental archeologists look for answers about the relationships between the Earth and people. They look for ecofacts or natural remains, such as those of wild and domesticated plants and animals found in the archeological record. Next, Geoarchaeologists, they work with geology and archaeology. Geoarcheologists look at the changing relationships between people and rocky places over thousands of years. Geoarcheologists tell us about what earlier landforms were like and how people may have used them. The last branch would be oral historians, these scientist combine talking and listening to study archaeology. Archeologists talk with people to learn about what they remember about growing up in a place, how they lived and worked, and how they used the objects archeologists dig up.

**Procedural Recommendations**

OVERVIEW: In this age of information, having to ask

the right questions to discover or understand something

seems to be a challenge for some students. This

activity is designed to stimulate the discovery process

through a problem-solving approach.

OBJECTIVE(s): Students will be able to:

1. Describe what they see as they observe the

"artifact".

2. Ask appropriate questions to learn what they need

to know.

3. Consult other sources of information besides the

teacher.

4. Draw conclusions based on the information gathered

as to:

(a) what the artifact might have been used

for;

(b) how old it might be.

MATERIALS:

Teacher: An ancient-looking "artifact" of some kind

Student: Worksheet, pencil and curiosity

ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES:

1. Teacher should first select a particular

"artifact" to be observed. The more nondescript,

the better, so that students will not be able to

guess what it is. (A piece of something that

looks "old" from the junk pile might work great!)

2. Bring it into the classroom in a box or sack (this

seems to heighten their curiosity) and begin

introducing the lesson. Use any "Indiana Jones"

or "Sherlock Holmes" come-ons you can think of.

3. Uncover the "artifact" (Don't be surprised by how

many "What is it?" questions pop out immediately!

Simply reply, "I don't know," or "I can't tell

you, but you can ask to find out!")

4. Divide into groups of 4-6 and invite each group to

take a turn observing it up closely.

5. Go through the worksheet item by item, encouraging

them to ask more questions as they need

information.

6. Conclude by discussing what "it" might be and how

they drew their conclusions. Accept any

reasonable answer and remind them that when

archaeologists (tourists, students, or anyone)

find something they don't recognize, they have to

put clues together in much the same way.

**Applications and Ideas**

When students enter the classroom the teacher will be dressed as Indiana Jones and have sample artifacts scattered about the classroom while the teacher plays the theme song to the movie. Students will be directed about the room to observe the artifacts. The students will be directed to the “lab” while “Indiana Jones” tells them about archaeology and the artifacts. Students will be given their discovery journal or worksheet to document their findings. Each artifact will be revealed one by one as the activity is completed. The students will then be assessed on the inquiry questions listed. They will record their answers in their discovery journals. The activity will end with “Indiana Jones” revealing the origin of the artifacts to the class.

**Assessment**

SAMPLE INQUIRY QUESTIONS:

1. What does it look like?

(a) Describe its color

(b) Describe its size

(c) Describe its shape

(d) Describe its material (rock, bone, wood,

metal, fabric, etc.)

2. Where was it found?

(a) Type of climate or environment

(b) Surrounding soil or rock

(c) How shallow or deep

3. What could it have been used for?

4. How old could it be?

(a) Describe its condition (effects of

erosion, rust, decay, how fragile)

(b) Material (consider how fast it might age

in a given environment)

(c) Your best estimation (circle one)

1-10 yrs 1-20 yrs 21-50 yrs

51-75 yrs 76-100 yrs 101-200 yrs

201-500 yrs 501-1000 yrs over 1000 yrs

over 2000 yrs over 3000 yrs

5. What do you think this artifact is?

**Web Sites And Sources**

Archaeology Lesson Plan

<http://ofcn.org/cyber.serv/academy/ace/soc/cecsst/cecsst188.html>

Archaeology Facts

<http://www.nps.gov/archeology/public/kids/kidsTwo.htm>

From Reel to Real

<http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/archaeology/index.jsp>

Lesson Plan- Archaeological Thinking

<http://smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/decoding_the_past/lesson1.html>

Lesson Plan- Layers of the Past

<http://smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/decoding_the_past/lesson2.html>

Lesson Plan- Puzzle Pieces

<http://smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/decoding_the_past/lesson3.html>

Indiana Jones theme song

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVNNhBtBbOs