

Lesson: Artifact Inquiry
Grade: K-12

Jocelyn Smith-Farrington
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Standards: Any standard within the specific grade that archaeology supports knowledge and understanding.

Topic: The role of archaeology in helping us to understand history

Objective:

Initially working alone, students will identify the function of previously unknown objects by their appearance and/or structure; students will ultimately work cooperatively.

Materials:

Bring in any strange objects or photos (enough to comfortably share) that would be unfamiliar or readily unidentifiable for most students. For women's history, a domestic item would be most appropriate!

Procedure:

1. Place objects in different parts of the room. Identify individual students to go and look at, touch, feel the item selected (no talking during the initial inspection. Students should return to their seats and write down what they think/know the item to be.
2. Divide the class into cooperative learning groups (pre-determined, based on assigned artifact) and give each team an artifact.
3. Allow each team to examine the objects for about three or four minutes. For example, if you have six teams, each team should spend three to four minutes examining each of the six items before passing it on to the next team. After several minutes of examination, teams need to rotate objects in a directed order so that each team will inspect all artifacts.
4. Teams will brainstorm the function of each artifact. Team members will write possible functions for each item. If, possible they can give an exact identity.
5. Once all teams have examined all objects, teams can be paired to share their information and ideas. The teacher will then disclose each item's actual name and use.

Assessment: Each team will receive points for participation based on their cooperation; in addition each student will write an assessment of the job of an archaeologist and describe the importance of archaeology to our knowledge of the past.

Culminating Activity: Help student simulate a real archaeological dig, with grids and tools of a professional. Or, call the Fitchburg Historical Society and ask about digs, Dr. Joy Cantois.