

Archaeological Lesson Kit: Class Activity

The purpose of this kit is for your students to excavate artifacts and to then draw conclusions through research and analysis about a particular civilization. Students will also experience some of the processes of being an archaeologist such as removing an artifact from its find site, analyzing its components and purpose and restoration/conservation of that artifact.

SETTING UP SITE

Each student or pair of students will receive one kit that they will need to excavate research and draw conclusions from those items they have found. They should first note the name of the civilization being excavated

Materials (those with an asterisk are supplied with kit or online)

-recording sheets*	-labels	-tools*	-bowl water
-graph paper	-pencil	-artifact bags	-Newspaper
-brush*	-ruler	-masking tape	-camera

DIG INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Prepare for excavation

1. Allocate one kit per student or student pair and the relevant recording sheet.(Download from our website – “Teachers Resource” Page).
2. Allocate one combined brush excavation tool per kit. (The brush is a dual purpose tool – excavate with the blunt handle end, brush away loose soil with the brush end – you may use a little water to soften the soil if necessary)
3. Cover tabletops/desks with newspaper or butcher’s paper to protect it. (make sure students clothing is protected)
4. Allocate a small bowl of water to each student (may be used to soften soil to help excavation).
5. Assign roles if more than one student is excavating a single kit and make a plan for the excavation of the kit. Ie. Who is digging, who is cleaning, who is recording/sorting, etc.
6. Note: These kits are NOT suitable for children under the age of seven. The kits may contain small parts. Make sure that the soil is not ingested in any way and that the students wash their hands thoroughly after using the kits.

Step 2: Digging and Recording

1. Using allocated tool/brush tools begin the excavation of the block of soil.
2. The students must excavate carefully so as not to damage inclusions. As soon as the student notices an artifact or piece of an artifact, they should immediately start using the brush end of the tool to clean away soil.
3. Ensure that all findings are carefully placed to the side so they are not thrown out with the soil. Students should carefully sort through the soil for any small components.
4. Clean all soil from artifacts with the brush end of the tool. They may carefully wash under running water if necessary.
5. Place all artifacts in “artifact bags” (zip lock bags) for further analysis.

6. Write students name on all artifact bags.

Step 3: Analysis, Conclusions and Report

1. After all artifacts have been excavated, begin the analysis of artifacts on recording sheet.
2. If the artifact is broken, begin careful restoration. Students should do a “dry run” using masking tape before any glue is applied.
3. Make sure students examine the edges of broken pieces before gluing as much can be learnt from this. Sharp edges indicate the pieces have not been tumbled around in the site, while rounded rough edges indicate that the pieces have been moved by plowing or during the subsequent deposition of overlaying layers. In the case of pottery the colour of the edge of broken pieces can indicate the type of firing process as well as indicate inclusions used to strengthen the clay.
4. Use only water based glue such as “Aquadhere” to glue components and use a minimal amount of glue. Make sure no glue oozes out onto the surface of the artifact and if it does it must be removed immediately with a damp cloth. If a mistake has been made with gluing an artifact the water based glue may be softened with water and the pieces separated.
5. Temporarily tape the pieces together with masking tape. Wait until the glue has dried before gluing subsequent pieces. This process will require a lot of patience.
6. Layout all artifacts for research.

Step 4: Presentation of Artifacts & Clean up

1. Clean up of area.
2. Overview of artifacts and research/conclusions / analysis. Each student should now use available resources to try to find out as much as possible about the artifact. Use school library, internet and our “Students Resource” page.
3. The “Students Research” page on our website has images and prompt questions on most of the items that the student is likely to excavate in the kit. If they excavate an item that cannot be found on our website, you may email us with an image of the item if they cannot reach a conclusion as to its identification.
4. Complete and hand in all required sheets / notes.
5. Optional class presentation. You may opt to have each student do a 5 minute presentation on their excavation/research so that the whole class benefits from each other’s findings.
6. Consider doing a “Museum” display in the school library to showcase your students work. The students could display items with a display card listing facts about the artifact next to each item so that the whole school may benefit from the display. A display card is available for download on our “Teachers Resource” page.

Archaeological Dig: Recording Sheet

A report sheet is available for each category of excavation. For the “Mesopotamia” kit data sheets are available online to help with translation of any ancient inscriptions. The student should first identify the artifact using our “Students Research” page and then download and print the relevant text sheet. They may then follow the text and its

translation on their clay tablet and draw conclusions of its historical significance and meaning.

ANALYSIS & CONCLUSIONS

On the reverse of the report sheet, answer the following questions for the artifacts as if they were AUTHENTIC! You may have to do some more research or refer to our "Students Research" page for help.

ANALYSIS

1. What is the artifact? When would it have been dated?
2. What materials would have been used to make this artifact? What skills would be required?
3. What would be the possible uses for the artifact? Who would have used it?

CONCLUSIONS

4. What does the artifact tell you about the civilization? Explain your conclusions.

HISTORIC CONNECTIONS

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