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The following lessons were created by **Sherry Flora**, a teacher participating in the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for Teachers entitled Touch the Past: Archaeology of the Upper Mississippi River Region.

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### **The Amish Culture**

**Grade Level:** I am using this with a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class, but it could be used for most elementary settings.

**Subjects:** This project uses a revised inquiry method to explore the Amish culture, so it will be mainly social studies with some science standards addressed.

**Objectives:** By the end of this project I would like my students to have some knowledge of the Amish culture, as well as familiarity with some of the methods an anthropologist would use to study any culture.

**Content Standards (from Ohio):** Geography Standard 5: Daily life is influenced by the agriculture, industry and natural resources in different communities. 8: Communities may include diverse cultural groups. Also....some of the science inquiry standards: Observe and ask questions about the natural environment, Communicate about observations, investigations and explanations; and Review and ask questions about the observations and explanations of others

**Duration:** Two class periods of 45-60 minutes each.

**Materials and Supplies:** I will have a large supply of actual photographs of the Amish taken partially from my own collection and partially from the internet (for me, I will try to get mostly Ohio, although I will use some from the institute). I want a variety of pictures that show their transportation, their technology, their houses, their clothing, their schools, their food, and their families. I also will have a collection of artifacts, including some authentic (bonnet, quilt work, soap) and some not authentic but true to what they would use (hand mixer, flour sifter, suspenders, simple toy, etc.) I will try to have at least one or two artifacts that the students will not be familiar with. I also will have a variety of fiction books (see list in the references section.) Finally, the attached activity sheets are needed.

**Vocabulary:**

anthropologist: a person who studies human behavior

archaeologist: a person who studies past cultures by analyzing artifacts and sites

artifact: any object made or used by humans

context: the relationship artifacts have to each other and the situation in which they are found

culture: the set of learned beliefs, values, and behaviors generally shared by a society

observation: recognizing or noting a fact or occurrence

inference: a conclusion derived from an observation

primary source: records of events as they are first described, usually by witnesses or people involved in the event

**Background:** According to The Association of Religion Data Archives, there were approximately 60,000 Amish living in Ohio (as of 2010). In fact, Ohio has the largest Amish population in the United States. The greatest concentration of Amish is in Holmes and adjoining counties in northeast Ohio. The Amish are a group of people with a culture that is very easily identifiable by their dress, their customs, and the simple way that they live, thus they are a culture easy for third graders (and other elementary students) to distinguish and explore with the inquiry method.

**Setting the Stage:** Ask the students: if you were an anthropologist and wanted to study a group of people who were new to you, what kinds of things would you want to study? As they list off ideas, start to organize their ideas by categories such as food, shelter, transportation, family, education, clothing, and technology. Talk about these categories and how all cultures have these basic things so if we find out about these topics we can compare a new culture to our own more easily.

**Procedure:**

1. I will preface this lesson by using the following lessons from *Intrigue of the Past*: Observation and Inference (p.14), Context (p. 19), Classification and Attributes (p. 27), and It's in the Garbage (p. 34.) Students should have a good working knowledge of the difference between an observation and an inference, how context can help them make observations and inferences, and ways that anthropologists and archaeologists obtain information.
2. Tell the students that they are going to be cultural anthropologists for the next few days. Usually cultural anthropologists study a culture by living with those people, but since we can't do that we are going to act more like archaeologists and instead use primary sources to help us make observations and inferences.
3. Hand out the Amish Observations Chart. Students will work in teams of 3-4 to fill out as many observations as they can at 7 different stations of "artifacts". Stations will be organized in context (food, shelter, transportation, family, education, and clothing...the last station will be picture books that might span all of the categories...make sure to explain that!) Do not label the stations...the student's first task will be to figure out what category each station is displaying. Remind students that they are not making any inferences yet, just writing down what they observe. Students should be given about 5 minutes per station. This will take an entire class period! Walk around and encourage discussion as well as watch for students getting confused by observation vs. inference.

4. The next day teams will come together with their observations. They will discuss their findings and write at least five inference statements (more if they have time while waiting for other groups to finish.) Each statement must include the observation(s) that leads them to that inference (example: We believe many Amish are farmers because there were many barns in the photographs.) Do a few together so the students understand what to do.
5. Have the teams share inferences and discuss them. How might our inferences be correct or incorrect? (for instance...if there was a picture of an Amish girl on roller skates, can we conclude that all Amish like to roller skate?) What further research would we need to do to find out if our conclusions are valid? Conclude the period by having each student write one question about the Amish that he/she would like to investigate. This will be used for a future research lesson.

**Closure:** Give the students a copy of the Amish Venn Diagram paper. Students will use the Venn diagram to compare and contrast themselves with what they have so far observed about the Amish. Let the students know that this will be a working document and we may need to make changes to it later!

**Evaluation:** Groups will turn in their inference statements for evaluation.

**Links/Extension:** This lesson can be followed by a research project in which the students find out a specific question they have about the Amish and do an oral or written report to share their findings. It can also be extended to exploring other cultures besides the Amish (I will do a similar procedure with the Japanese and the Hispanic cultures, although somewhat modified, since those are the cultures close to my third graders.)

References: I will have the following trade books available in my room for this project and for the students to browse:

Amish Children by Phyllis Pellman Good

An Amish Christmas by Richard Ammon

An Amish Wedding by Richard Ammon

Down Buttermilk Lane by Barbara Mitchell

Henner's Lydia by Marguerite De Angeli

Just Like Mama by Beverly Lewis

Reuben and the Balloon, Reuben and the Quilt, Reuben and the Fire, and Reuben and the Quilt  
by Merle Good

**Attachments:** Amish Observations Chart, Amish Venn Diagram

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### **Amish Observations**

Directions: At each station, look at the primary sources you have been given. Decide which category the primary sources fall under, then write as many observations about them as you can in the time you are given. The station that has picture books will have information that can be put anywhere on the chart!

Food	
Shelter	
Transportation	
Family	
Education	
Clothing	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Amish Venn Diagram

Directions: Use the Venn Diagram to compare and contrast you with the Amish. Do as many as you can think of right now. Use a pencil! You may need to change some of your ideas later!

You

The Amish

