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The following lessons were created by **Jeanne Faucheux**, 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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Exploring the Past: Archaeology, History and Early Human Communities

Grade Level: 5th-6th

Subjects: Social Studies

Objectives: Students will understand that archaeology provides a method for understanding human activity in the past by analyzing patterns of evidence provided by artifacts and sites. Through this study of the material evidence of human life students will reflect on the problems and accomplishments of human communities over time.

Standards: For my purposes, I am using selected standards from the NCSS National Curriculum Standards for the Social Studies.

Theme #1: Culture

- Students will understand that “culture” refers to the behaviors, beliefs, values, traditions and ways of living together that form a group of people.
- Students will understand how individuals learn the elements of their culture through interactions with other members of the culture group.

Theme #2: Time, Continuity, and Change

- Students will understand that the study of the past is the story of communities, nations and the world.
- Students will be able to describe examples of cause and effect relationships.

Theme #3: People, Places, and Environments

- Students will understand factors influencing regional patterns of human settlement, such as the availability of land and water, and places for people to live.
- Students will understand physical changes such as seasons, climate and weather, and their affect on plants and animals.

Theme #7: Production, Distribution and Consumption

- Students will understand how people and communities deal with scarcity of resources.
- Students will understand the difference between needs and wants.

Theme #8: Science, Technology, and Society

- Students will understand that science involves the study of the natural world, and technology

refers to the tools we use to accomplish tasks.

-Students will understand that society often turns to science and technology to solve problems.

-Students will understand that science and technology can have both positive and negative impacts on individuals, society and the globe.

Duration: 5-6 Weeks

Materials/Supplies: Please refer to specifics in the noted lesson plans from *Intrigue of the Past, Digging and Discovery*, and SAA's *Teaching Archaeology*. In my classroom, I am using Holt's *World History* textbook.

Vocabulary:

history
culture
anthropology
archaeology
fossils
artifacts
site
beliefs
customs
values
hominids
Australopithecus
"Lucy"
prehistory
evidence
Homo habilis
Homo erectus
Homo sapiens
lithics
Paleolithic Era
society
culture
hunter-gatherers
adaptation
tool
Lascaux
Chauvet
Altamira
distribute
Ötzi
petroglyphs
pictographs
climate
migrate
ice ages
land bridge
theory
mammoth
mastodon
adapt
Mesolithic Era
technology

Setting the Stage:

Imagine you are with your family on a camping trip. As you are setting up your camp, you find what looks like an arrowhead near your tent site. You bring it to show your family and everyone begins to wonder. Who made this? What is it doing here? Is it an authentic artifact? What will you do next about this object you have found?

Procedure:

This project is intended to guide a six-week-long introductory unit for an early middle school World History class. For my teaching purposes, it acts as the very first unit of the school year and therefore leaves room for a teacher to determine his or her own process.

Week 1**Big Questions:**

What does it mean to remember?

Is learning about the past necessary for us?

How do we learn about the past?

Activities:

1. Direct instruction with vocabulary, reading comprehension, organization and thinking skills. Holt *World History* pp. 6-7, 10-11.
2. “Why Is the Past Important?” adapted from *Intrigue of the Past Lesson 1*, pg. 9. This lesson requires students to bring in an object, or a drawing of an object, from home.
3. “What Ought to Rot?” Part 1 from *Teaching Archaeology* CD (Society for American Archaeology Public Education Committee). This activity is a scientific experiment designed to observe how organic material decomposes in different climate conditions. This will be continued in Week 4.

Evaluation:

Students will write a one paragraph response to the question, “Why is it important for you to know about your own past?” or “Why is it important for a group to know about its own past?”

Week 2**Big Questions:**

What do humans need to survive?

What makes humans different from other mammals?

What are tools?

Activities:

1. Follow-up discussion for last week’s evaluation activity. Lead students to consensus based on the ideas of why the past is important.
2. Brainstorm. In small groups, have students list 5 things that make humans different than other animals. Follow up with discussion. Finalize group consensus and post.
3. Non-fiction reading activity. Read and respond to the article from *Dig Magazine* called “Ötzi’s Snowshoes.” Discuss the process archaeologists used to create theories about the tools Otzi carried with him.
4. Direct instruction with vocabulary, reading comprehension, organization and thinking skills. Holt *World History* pp. 24-25, 28-31.

Evaluation:

Create a “survival kit”—if you were stranded on a desert island, what 5 items would you bring. You can write a list, draw images of the five items, or bring five items in from home. Be prepared to explain your choices. (Student’s choices should reflect their understanding of previously discussed human needs.)

Week 3

Big Questions:

How do humans change to survive in a difficult environment?
How do humans change their environment in order to survive?
Why do humans move and migrate?

Activities:

1. Direct instruction with vocabulary, reading comprehension, organization and thinking skills. Holt *World History* pp. 32-35.
2. Discovery Channel Video: “Mammoth Journey” from *Walking with Beasts* series. Video note taking accompanies viewing.
3. “Exploring the Seasonal Cycle of Archaic Life” adapting from *Digging and Discovery*. This activity might require more than one class session and includes evaluation ideas.

Week 4

Big Questions:

What is culture?
What causes differences among groups?

Activities:

1. “Culture Everywhere” adapted from *Intrigue of the Past Lesson 2*.
2. “Design a Culture” adapted from Dr. Jim Theler’s notes. (I will post when my particular version is complete.)
3. Direct instruction with vocabulary, reading comprehension, organization and thinking skills. Holt *World History* pp. 36-39.

Evaluation:

Students will write a 3 paragraph “journal” entry from the point of view of a member of their created society. In the first paragraph, students establish who they are, where they live and a basic description of the society’s way of life. In the second paragraph, students will respond to a particular challenge or stressor on their community (for example, drought, absence of game, disease, hostility with another group.” Students should address the options that the community sees, perhaps discussing the pro’s and con’s of each. Finally, the third paragraph will discuss what decision the community made and how it affected the individual’s life and perspective. This may be a two day activity.

Week 5

Big Questions:

How can we know these events really happened?
What is the work of archaeologists?
What is the relationship between evidence and understanding about the past?

Activities:

1. “Observation and Inference” adapted from *Intrigue of the Past Lesson 3* or “Artifacts from Home” adapted from *Digging and Discovery*.
2. “Context” adapted from *Intrigue of the Past*, or “Context Clues” adapted from *Digging and Discovery*.
3. “Scientific Inquiry” adapted from *Intrigue of the Past Lesson 7*.
4. “What Ought to Rot” part 2. In this stage of the activity, students will make observations following the scientific method. As a group, we will discuss the application of these scientific observations in the field of archaeology.

Week 6: Evaluation: Break these steps down as needed.

Activity: “Chronology: The Time of My Life” adapted from *Intrigue of the Past*.

1. Students come to class with a list of ten important events from their lives. (Tell kids not to tell when this

happened—don't give time clues.)

2. In class, have students write each event on a different strip of colored paper.
3. Next to each event, students draw an object that might symbolize the event.
4. Students shuffle events and exchange with another student. Next, each student must try to lay the strips out in chronological order.
5. Students share their guesses with one another and discuss. Class discussion follows.
6. Each student then takes their own strips and glues them in order.
7. Complete the lesson following the "Closure" steps on page 23 of *Intrigue of the Past*, including the materials needed for the lesson "Stratigraphy and Cross-dating."
8. Ultimately, this activity will reveal what concepts students clearly mastered and which need future learning activities for reinforcement.

Links/Extension:

- Discovery Channel's *Walking With Beasts: Mammoth Journey*
- *Dig Magazine's* article "Ötzi's Snowshoes" from the High Fashion issue of May 2006.
- Discovery Education's online videos about Otzi called "Living the Life of Otzi. " (Anthropologists analyze theories of what the ice man, Otzi, was doing in the Alps when he died.)

References:

- Holt *World History*
- *Intrigue of the Past*
- *Digging and Discovery*
- *SAA Teaching Archaeology*
- Jim Theler's lecture notes and activity ideas from the NEH Summer Institute