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The following lessons were created by **Miranda Meyerson**, 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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Objects Tell Stories

Grade Level: Middle School

Subject: Social Studies

Objectives: Students will be able to

1. Define artifact
2. Apply a framework to begin analysis of objects or artifacts
3. Understand that all objects have a story to tell
4. Understand that artifacts need context to be understood

Standards:

New York State Thematic Strands 1-3

Duration: 1Hour

Materials and Supplies:

Internet or copy of *Part of Your World*
Various bizarre objects
Worksheet for each student

Vocabulary

Artifact
Context

Background

Teach this lesson at the beginning of the year. It can be done as an introduction to studying history and as an icebreaker.

Setting the Stage/Do Now

Teacher: Show the clip of Part of Your World from the Disney film little Mermaid and distribute lyrics.

Students Answer:

1. What is Ariel unfamiliar with?
2. Why doesn't she know what these objects are?
3. Why do you think she is drawn to these objects?

Teacher: Have students share out. Lead students into discussion of context and its importance. How can we learn from objects left behind by humans?

Lesson:

Give definition

Artifact: object created by humans

Context: surroundings

Activity/Assignment:

1. Break students into heterogeneous groups of 3-4 and distribute graphic organizer
2. Students will examine an artifact at each station and fill out the graphic organizer with the following categories
 - a. What is it made of?
 - b. Does it take skill to make this? If so, what kind?
 - c. What does it remind you of?
 - d. What is it?
3. Share out answer and post on board
4. Give students some context for each object, like the room of the house or type of place it would be found in. This can also be done in groups after filling out the graphic organizer if you are sure students won't cheat and look at the context card first
5. Then have students figure out what the object is using the context and examine how their answers changed and finish the last two rows of the graphic organizer.
6. Discussion:
 - a. How do you figure out what something is used for?
 - b. Why does context matter?
 - c. What can we learn from artifacts?
 - d. When might we need to examine artifacts?
 - e. How do objects tell stories?
7. Exit Ticket:
 - a. What is an artifact?
 - b. How does context help when interpreting artifacts?

Evaluation: Exit ticket, completed graphic organizer, participation in discussion

Links/Extensions/Homework:

1. List five objects in your room/the classroom. Answer the question: according to these objects what someone might think of us in 100 years and why.
2. Bring in three objects from home that when put together paint a picture of who you are. Let other students examine the artifact collection and draw conclusions about their classmates – can be used as an icebreaker and way to build respect for each other.
3. Can lead into other lessons on archeology or types of historical sources.

Name_____

Class_____

Date_____

Objects Tell Stories

Instructions:

1. In groups, examine the following artifacts and fill out the graphic organizer.
2. DO NOT FILL OUT THE BOTTOM TWO ROWS until after we go over part two!

Question	Artifact A	Artifact B	Artifact c	Artifact D
What is it made of?				
Does it take skill to make this? If so, what kind of skill?				
What does it remind you of?				
What do you think it is?				
This was found in the...				
What is it?				