



Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center
1725 State Street
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601
Phone: 608-785-6473
Web site: <http://www.uwlax.edu/mvac/>

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

“Why do we need to learn about the past?”

Grade Level: 5th grade

Subjects: social studies, language arts

Objectives: to discuss general misconceptions while helping students to understand and realize what we can learn about people in general from studying past peoples and why the past is important.

Standards: SS.5.A.1.1, SS.5.A.1.2, LA.5.1.5.1, LA.5.1.6.1, LA.5.1.6.2, LA.5.1.6.3, LA.5.1.6.4 and LA.5.1.6.5

Duration: 30 to 60 minutes

Materials/Supplies: brown paper bags and articles or pictures brought from home

Vocabulary: archaeology, archaeological site, artifact, anthropology

Anthropology is the study of humans and their behavior. Archaeology is a sequence of techniques used to reconstruct the past. Archaeological records are products of human behavior patterns. Sites are places where people have done something that has left a physical trace. Artifact is something made or altered by humans.

Background: All people have basic needs that have to be met - food, clothing, love and shelter. Because of these needs, we can see how all people are similar even though there are differences. (This might be a good lead in to how we

need to be tolerant of others.)

Setting the Stage:

This lesson helps create the understanding of why we want to study the past and how scientists go about doing that study. I would begin the whole lesson by writing “the past, what does it mean to you” on the board and having the students think/pair/share on this for a few minutes. Then I would use the voice thread created by a teacher in the 2010 Exploring the Past, NEH Summer Institute for Teachers (<http://www.uwlax.edu/mvac/PDFFiles/NEH2010Les/PastPeople.pdf>) as an introduction to aid in setting the stage and have the students begin to expand their ideas about the past.

Procedure:

1. Instruct students to bring an object or picture from home that represents their family’s past, in a plain brown bag.
2. Make a list of reasons why we would like to study the past.
3. Share background information and define vocabulary.
4. Remove one article at a time from bags and discuss what it is or could be and what uses could have been intended.
5. Discuss objects and answer questions as we go.

Closure:

Each student will write a paragraph summary of what the past means to him/her and why they feel it is/isn’t important to study the past. Give 3 reasons to defend your answer.

Evaluation:

I will read each paragraph looking to see if each student answered what the past means to them and if they gave 3 logical reasons to support their viewpoint. This will be our stepping stone into our study of the past and what can be learned about people.

References:

[Intrigue of the Past A Teacher’s Activity Guide for Fourth through Seventh Grades](#) published by the United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management.