



Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center
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This lesson was created by a teacher participating in a Wisconsin ESEA Improving Teacher Quality grant entitled Inquiry Based Technology-Mediated Teacher Professional Development and Application.

- Title: Artifact Identification – What is it?
- Submitted by: Heidi Tubbs
- Grade Level: 4-8
- Subjects: Social Studies
- Objectives: Students will observe an artifact and make an inference about the artifact's purpose.
- WI Standards: Social Studies B.4.1, B.4.8
- Duration: 45 minutes
- Materials/Supplies: Artifacts from the past (examples – ice tong, sadiron, washboard, rug beater, coffee grinder, nutmeg grater, egg scale, butter mold, seedcorn dryer, chamber pot, etc.)
- Vocabulary: -Artifacts - physical objects left behind by past people at places where people lived, worked, and played.
-Hypothesize - tentative assumption about how things worked in the past
-Observe - to see or sense through careful attention
- Background: Teachers will need to have background knowledge about the objects they are displaying. Students should be able to make observations.
- Setting the Stage: Tell students - Today we are going to be archaeologists. Archaeologists use artifacts to hypothesize (make guesses using observation) about the lives of past people.
- Procedure:
1. Put students into groups of two or three.
 2. Set up numbered stations, each containing a different artifact.
 3. Give students a worksheet. Each worksheet lists: station number, observations (list three observations for each artifact), hypothesis about

artifact's purpose, and name of artifact.

4. Give each group about 5 minutes at each station and then rotate around the room.

5. After students have completed each station, have a class discussion about the artifacts and then share the background information about the artifacts with them.

Closure: Ask students, "What is an artifact? How do we make observations? What is a hypothesis?"

Evaluation: Students will make observations about an artifact and make a reasonable hypothesis about the artifact's purpose based on their observations. Evaluate students' worksheets.

Links/Extension: 1. Have students bring in artifacts (with parent permission) and hypothesize about the purpose of the artifact. This lesson could be used with studying inventions. Ask students how the artifacts could be made better.
2. Find old pictures with the artifacts. See if students can figure out the artifact when it is put into context.

References: Old catalogs from the 1900's could help in identifying objects. Relate to students how the presence of written and oral records, help archaeologists to understand the events and ideas of a given time period. Antique books about primitives could also be used as a reference.

Name _____

Date _____

Artifact Observation and Identification

Station Number _____

Observations of Artifact

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Purpose of Artifact _____

Name of Artifact _____

Station Number _____

Observations of Artifact

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Purpose of Artifact _____

Name of Artifact _____