LIFE IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA: Archaeology

Tell Tales: Reconstructing A Personal Tell
A Classroom and Museum Activity

Subjects Areas: Social Studies, Language Arts
Created By: JoAnne Groshek, Alexander Graham Bell School, Chicago, Illinois
Grade Level: 6
Meets Illinois State Goals: 1, 3, 5, 7, and 16
Time Needed: 8-10 40-minute periods

Objectives:
1. To stress the importance of careful observation and the development of a vocabulary,
2. To construct a tell model with personal artifacts,
3. To examine artifacts from a model tell and make inferences, and
4. To write a description, from the artifacts found, of the owner of the items.

Materials:
Books, slides and videos
Paper and pencils
Hole punch
Wall Tacky
Newspaper
Yarn (for locus tags)
Spoons, paint brushes, and sieve (see attachment)
Plastic disposable soup bowls (one per student)
Two-thirds yard of wire screen
Masking tape
One gallon Zip-Loc bags (one per student)
Egg cartons (one per student)

Students provide:
One shoe box lined with a plastic grocery bag
Soil
9-12 personal artifacts (ones that can fit into the spaces of an empty egg carton)

Suggested Procedure:
The students will spend 4-5 days reading and discussing how archaeologists study artifacts, where the artifacts are found and how to investigate and interpret artifacts from their own lives. Videos and slides will be used to enhance their understanding of the archaeological process. Record-keeping techniques will be introduced and the various ways of interpreting data will be discussed. The students will develop a working vocabulary of archaeological terms.
Vocabulary:
antiquity – ancient times
archaeology – to study what is ancient
artifact – an object created or produced by humans and then left behind
excavate – to remove or expose artifacts by digging in a systematic manner
field – a section or site to be excavated
find – any archaeological discovery
in situ – Latin phrase meaning “in place;” excavated artifacts are recorded in situ before removing them from the field
locus – locality of place; a specific location in which artifacts are found
locus sheet – card attached to artifacts detailing when and where they were found
site – a place or area to be excavated
stratified site – place people have lived for hundreds or thousands of years and built settlements, one on top of the other
tell – artificial mountain made by layers of inhabitation over centuries

After the introduction of how archaeologists learn about the day-to-day lives of ancient peoples, the students will investigate and interpret artifacts from their own lives and homes. This first hands-on activity is for homework.

Evaluation:
All aspects of this archaeological study must be completed to receive a passing grade for the unit. The students will be assigned a set number of points that can be earned for each activity. The total number of possible points is 100. The following is a description of the activity and its possible points:
10 pts. – An excavation site with personal artifacts
10 pts. – A complete excavation of the site
20 pts. – Each article drawn, numbered and described on the locus worksheet
10 pts. – Artifacts displayed in egg carton and properly tagged with locus
25 pts. – A written interpretation of the site’s owner
25 pts. – Presentation of excavation results

The written assignment and oral presentation must include the correct usage of more than eight vocabulary words to earn the maximum points. The students will receive the following rubric as a guide to help them know what else is expected of them.

Extensions:
1. In addition to the oral presentation, the students will be required to develop a power point presentation of their own artifacts. They should include what the artifacts say about their lives and the times.
2. In small groups, students can research an ancient culture. They can find four artifacts that represent that culture. The artifacts are drawn and described on a locus worksheet and the group writes what they can tell about these ancient peoples’ lifestyle.
3. Students can research pottery styles of today and interpret what they tell about our culture. They can discuss how they are similar to and different from ancient pottery.
How to Make a Sieve

1. Trace the bottom of a disposable plastic bowl onto the wire screen.
2. Cut out the circle traced on the screen and set aside.
3. Cut a circle out of the bottom of the plastic bowl leaving a ¼” to ½” edge.
4. Tape the screen circle onto the bottom of the bowl.

Locus Tag

Site: ________________________________

Archaeologist’s Name: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Locus Sheet

Site: _____________________________
Archaeologist’s Name: _____________________________

Draw one artifact in each square.

1. 2. 3.
4. 5. 6.
7. 8. 9.
10. 11. 12.
Locus Sheet

Site: _____________________________
Archaeologist’s Name: ____________________________

List each artifact on the same line as the box number. Give a description of the artifact.

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________

4. ________________________________________________________________

5. ________________________________________________________________

6. ________________________________________________________________

7. ________________________________________________________________

8. ________________________________________________________________

9. ________________________________________________________________

10. ________________________________________________________________

11. ________________________________________________________________

12. ________________________________________________________________
### Rubric for Evaluation of Archaeological Unit: Tell Tales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An “A” Student will</th>
<th>A “B” Student will</th>
<th>A “C” Student will</th>
<th>A “D” Student will</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete all activities correctly and efficiently record data</td>
<td>Complete all activities correctly and record necessary data</td>
<td>Complete all activities correctly and record most data</td>
<td>Complete the activities and record some data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enthusiastically participate in hands-on learning</th>
<th>Willingly participate in hands-on learning</th>
<th>Participate in hands-on learning</th>
<th>Reluctantly participate in hands-on learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points: 41-50</td>
<td>Points: 31-40</td>
<td>Points: 11-30</td>
<td>Points: 0-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participate in class discussions; listen when others talk; be non-judgmental</th>
<th>Participate in class discussions; be attentive when others are speaking</th>
<th>Listen quietly when others are speaking</th>
<th>Participate in class discussions little or not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points: 41-50</td>
<td>Points: 31-40</td>
<td>Points: 11-30</td>
<td>Points: 0-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evaluation:

- **A** = 172-200 points
- **B** = 142-169 points
- **C** = 92-139 points
- **D** = 65- 89 points

**Total Points:** _____

**Final Grade:** _____

**Name:** ________________________________

**Note:** Any missing assignments will result in a failing grade.