



Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan

Artifacts

School: Lynnhurst School
Subject: Social Studies

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Grade: 3

Introduction:

What are artifacts and how do they help us piece history together?

Objectives:

Students will know:

- An artifact is something that people made, used, and left behind.
- An archaeologist is a scientist who studies ancient cultures by examining artifacts.
- Artifacts can help us know about the past and how people lived.
- Our interpretation of history becomes clearer and often changes as new artifacts are found.

Materials:

- “Artifact” from the present that children would probably not recognize (I plan to use a plastic cardholder from a floral arrangement)
- Second “artifact” that would help to identify the first one (Planter from which the card holder came)
- Large children’s puzzle with about twenty-five or thirty pieces
- “Artifact boxes” (four or five)

Activities:

- Use the plastic cardholder (or other “artifact” you have chosen) to initiate a discussion as to what the “artifact” is and how it could be used. (Do not reveal the actual use of it.)
- Introduce the word artifact and define it as ‘objects people made, used, and left behind’.



Some artifacts at the Saugus Iron Works



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- Introduce the word archaeologist and define it as ‘a scientist who studies ancient cultures by examining artifacts’.
- Talk about what artifacts could tell us about the people who used them. Allow children to contribute suggestions. What if we find something and we don’t know what it is? Refer back to the cardholder.
- Pass out puzzle pieces - one or two to each child. Instruct children not to show their pieces to classmates. Ask each one to predict what the puzzle will look like based on the piece s/he has.
- Have the children put the puzzle together one piece at a time. Stop periodically for children to make revisions in their predictions. When the puzzle is complete invite comments on the finished product. How close were the children’s predictions? How did it help to have the pieces that others were holding?
- Refer back to the cardholder “artifact”. Show the planter and ask the children if they can identify this “artifact” found close by the first one. Does this second “ artifact” help us decide how the first one might be used?
- Lead the children to make connections between the puzzle activity and the planter/cardholder activity.
- Make the point that much of history is like the puzzle. There is nothing to go by except for the artifacts and other clues (such as where the artifacts were found). When a new piece of information is found scientists must make adjustments to their thinking.

Assessment:

Tell children they will now take the role of archaeologists and work in teams to make sense of some artifacts that have been discovered. Present each team with a well thought out “artifact box” of objects that go together in some way. Allow the children to study the objects and write about their ideas in light of the lesson. Is there a connection between them? How did they decide what the connections are? What inferences did they make? etc.

Extensions:

- As a homework assignment children could create artifact boxes about themselves. Bring them in without names and have classmates try to identify to whom they belong.
- Visit the Saugus Iron Works historical site and examine the collection of artifacts from the excavation of the site.