

Archaeological Discoveries Classroom Activity

The Classroom Activity introduces students to the context of a performance task, so they are not disadvantaged in demonstrating the skills the task intends to assess. Contextual elements include: an understanding of the setting or situation in which the task is placed, potentially unfamiliar concepts that are associated with the scenario, and key terms or vocabulary students will need to understand in order to meaningfully engage with and complete the performance task. The Classroom Activity is also intended to generate student interest in further exploration of the key idea(s). The Classroom Activity should be easy to implement with clear instructions.

Please read through the entire Classroom Activity before beginning the activity with students to ensure any classroom preparation can be completed in advance.

Throughout the activity it is permissible to pause and ask students if they have any questions.

Resources Needed:

- Chart paper, projector, whiteboard, or a chalkboard
- Markers or chalk
- One piece of paper and pencil for each student. (Students who need an accommodation may use their preferred tool for writing.)

Learning Goal:

- Students will understand the context of the key concepts related to the topic:
 - Archeologists learn about historic cultures by studying artifacts, inscriptions, and monuments from the past.

Students will understand the key term related to the topic:

- Archaeology: the scientific study of historic or prehistoric peoples and their cultures by analysis of their artifacts, inscriptions, and monuments.

Note: Definitions are provided here for the convenience of facilitators. Students are expected to understand this key term in the context of the task, not memorize the definitions.

Archaeological Discoveries Classroom Activity

[Purpose: The facilitator’s goal is to introduce students to the key term of archaeology. Students will need to be familiar with this key term to successfully complete the performance task.]

[Pass out a sheet of paper and a pencil to each student.]

Facilitator says: “There have been many discoveries in the field of archaeology. In preparation for your performance task, we will discuss what archaeology is and how archeologists study historic cultures. First, let’s use what we already know about archaeology. On the provided sheet of paper, take two minutes to write down whatever you know about archaeology.”

[Give the students two minutes to write down their thoughts. While students are writing, circulate around the room encouraging students to stay on task.]

Facilitator says: “With the person next to you, pair up and share what you wrote about archaeology.”

[Give the students a minute or two to share their responses with their partner.]

Facilitator says: “With your partner, take two minutes to come up with a definition for archaeology.”

[Give the students two minutes to write down their thoughts. While students are writing, circulate around the room encouraging students to stay on task.]

Facilitator says: “As a pair, share what you have written with another pair around you. Add to your definition based on your discussion and we will discuss as a class when you are finished.”

[Note: The following section can be modified to accommodate various teacher-student interaction types such as a teacher-led discussion with the entire class, teacher-student discussion for remote locations with a single student, or small groups.]

[Allow two minutes for students to discuss their brainstorm definition. While students are discussing, circulate around the room encouraging students to stay on task.]

Facilitator says: “What sort of definitions did you and your peers come up with? Please, raise your hand and I will call on you.”

[Take a few volunteers and write down their responses on the board.]

Possible class discussion answers (*unscripted*):

- Archaeology is the study of old civilizations.
- Archaeologists study ancient cultures.
- Archaeology involves digging in the dirt for older items.
- Indiana Jones® was an archaeologist.

[When discussion is finished, write the following definition on the board: “Archaeology: the scientific study of historic or prehistoric peoples and their cultures by analysis of:” Underneath this, write the following in individual bullet points: artifacts, inscriptions (writing), monuments]

Facilitator says: “Archaeology is the scientific study of historic or prehistoric peoples and their cultures by analysis of their artifacts, inscriptions (writing), and monuments. As a way of thinking further about this, we are going to brainstorm what sorts of artifacts, inscriptions, and monuments a future archaeologist would find in our country. Just for the sake of this hypothetical situation, let us say future archaeologists don’t have access to the Internet, so they won’t find social media websites, or mobile games, etc. On your piece of paper, brainstorm for four minutes some artifacts, inscriptions, and monuments we would leave behind in our society.”

[Give the students four minutes to write down their thoughts. While students are writing, circulate around the room encouraging students to stay on task.]

Facilitator says: “Take two more minutes to share what you have written with two different people around you from the first discussion. We will discuss as a class when you are finished.”

[Allow two minutes for students to discuss their brainstorm definition. While students are discussing, circulate around the room encouraging students to stay on task.]

Facilitator says: “What sorts of artifacts, inscriptions, and monuments did you and your peers come up with? Please, raise your hand and I will call on you.”

[Take volunteers and write down their responses on the board.]

Possible class discussion answers (*unscripted*):

- Artifacts: Computers, cellphones, MP3 players, cars, televisions, couches, kitchen utensils
- Inscriptions: Popular fiction novels, store signs and logos, clocks
- Monuments: Mount Rushmore, New York City skyscrapers, coffee shop chains, gas stations/pumps, any sort of building in your local area could also fit in this category

Facilitator says: “As you can tell from our list, archaeologists would have quite a few things to analyze from our time period. The difficulty with analyzing these artifacts, inscriptions, and monuments is the huge disconnect between the times. What will archaeologists think a smartphone was used for when they study our culture thousands of years from now? For archaeologists, it is one thing to discover an old artifact, inscription, or monument, but it is considerably harder to understand the purpose.”

Facilitator says: “You will learn more about the field of archaeology and various archaeological discoveries in the performance task you will be completing. Remember that archaeology is the scientific study of historic or prehistoric peoples and their cultures by analysis of their artifacts, inscriptions, and monuments. You are now ready to complete your performance task. Please, leave your recorded notes and pencils behind to be collected.”