

Excavating the Past



STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY CORRELATIONS:

Social Studies, Grade 4, Goal 1: The learner will apply the five themes of geography to North Carolina and its people.

1.04 Evaluate ways the people of North Carolina used, modified, and adapted to the physical environment, past and present.

Social Studies, Grade 4, Goal 2: The learner will examine the importance of the role of ethnic groups and examine the multiple roles they have played in the development of North Carolina.

2.04 Describe how different ethnic groups have influenced culture, customs and history of North Carolina.

Social Studies, Grade 8, Goal 1: The learner will analyze important geographic, political, economic, and social aspects of life in the region prior to the Revolutionary Period.

1.01 Assess the impact of geography on the settlement and developing economy of the Carolina colony.

Science, Grades 6, 7, 8, Goal 1: The learner will design and conduct investigations to demonstrate an understanding of scientific inquiry.

1.05 Analyze evidence to explain observations, make inferences and predictions, and develop the relationship between evidence and explanation.

INTRODUCTION TO LESSON: Students will examine items from a simulated archaeological mini-dig and reconstruct the culture of the people associated with the artifacts.

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHER: As scientists, archaeologists infer what they can about historic cultures by examining the remnants of their belongings. These remains tell a story of the people's language, religion, values, technological capabilities and day-to-day life. The evidence found at archaeological sites sometimes alters what was assumed about a certain people or culture.

MATERIALS

- Containers, one per four students (e.g., wash basins, pickle jars, plastic shoeboxes, storage containers)
- Dried beans/peas
- Objects (artifacts) that represent the lifestyle of various cultures (see page 3)

PREPARATION

Fill each container two-thirds to three-quarters full of beans/peas. These will simulate the soil/earth at dig sites and provide a substance that is clean and easy to use. In each container, hide five to 10 items that relate to a single culture within a particular time frame.

engage > Ask students to brainstorm ways they might learn about someone who is no longer alive. List their ideas on the board. Now ask students to rethink the question—this time they must assume there is no one alive who knew the deceased. (*If necessary, guide students to consider that the deceased may have left personal belongings behind.*) Write down new ideas on the board and erase any that no longer apply.

explore > Show **Chapter 3** and **Chapter 6** of the video. Tell students they will become archaeologists by conducting their own “mini-dig” for items left by a real or imaginary culture.

explain > Divide class into teams of four and distribute containers. Have teams perform their mock archaeological mini-dig, removing the items from the beans, identifying them and recording them on a sheet of paper. Tell them to develop a story about the person or persons associated with the items, pondering questions such as: Who were the people? What did they do? Did they have pets, jobs or hobbies, friends or family? Did they travel? Did they have medical issues?



Earthen mound at Town Creek Indian Mound photograph by David Walbert, LEARN NC, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Education.

explain > As a class, discuss what might happen when cultures merge or clash. If the people identified in their archaeological exploration were to move to this community tomorrow, what impact would it have? What influence would the local community have on these people? Would the effects of these two cultures coming together be different if it happened 200 years ago? Why or why not? **Show Chapter 7 of the video.**

elaborate > Have individual students develop a list of six to 10 items that would provide outsiders with insight into who they are as a person. The items should reveal something about the students' beliefs, education, hobbies, family and lifestyle.

evaluate >

- Have teams share their interpretive stories of the cultures they unearthed.
- Review individual lists from the *Elaborate* exercise.

Teacher's Notes:



BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Plan a field trip to one of North Carolina's many public archaeological sites. For a list of sites and visitor information, go to <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/intrigue/1232>.

Additional Resources:

History of the Berry Site •

<http://www.warren-wilson.edu/~arch/berrysite>

Warren Wilson College

Archaeology Lesson Plans for Grades 4-8 • <http://www.rla.unc.edu/lessons/Menu/menu.htm>



For teacher:

Before the lesson, prepare a mini-dig container for each team of four students. Each container should include items that represent a single culture. For example, if the people from that site were Chinese, some of the following items could represent their culture: portion of a letter written in Chinese (free online translator programs can convert English to Chinese), mini Buddha, Chinese lantern, Chinese calendar, recipe for a Chinese dish, portion of a map of a particular region of China, chopsticks, currency, postage stamps, photo of a Chinese family, scrap piece of silk.

Some examples of items that may be “buried”:

Religious artifacts:

- Scriptures from various religions
- Miniature Buddha
- Crucifix, rosary beads
- Miniature Tibetan prayer flags
- Hanukkah candles, Star of David, temple bulletin

Music-related artifacts:

- Harmonica
- Pea-less whistle
- Kazoo
- Sheet music (e.g., songs from 1950s or 60s)
- Cassette
- 8-track tape
- 45 record
- CD
- Music player, earbuds

Travel-related artifacts:

- Airline ticket
- Train ticket/schedule
- Bus ticket/schedule
- Tube map
- Metro map
- Portion of road map
- Foreign currency
- Stamps

Health-related artifacts:

- Packet of artificial sweetener (could point to diabetes)
- Sugar-free candy wrapper (could point to diabetes)
- Small pill jar
- Dental floss container
- Adhesive bandage
- Miniature hand sanitizer bottle
- Tiny mirror

Entertainment-related artifacts:

- Theater ticket stub
- Golf ball or tee
- Souvenir program from sports event
- Collectible card
- DVD or VHS tape
- 35mm slide or photo negative

Miscellaneous personal artifacts:

- Itemized bill/receipt
- Pacifier
- Baby sock
- Pocket calendar (with appointments)
- Family vacation photos
- Dog/cat collar
- Small dog biscuit
- Flash drive (a broken one will do)
- Business cards
- Drink label
- Cork with vineyard’s name/location written on it
- Chewing gum

Miscellaneous artifacts:

- Small reflector
- Piece of Velcro
- Piece of chalk
- Eyeglasses/sunglasses
- Hair accessory
- Comb
- Small figurine
- Toy car
- Page from TV Guide
- Miniature LED flashlight
- Keychain with car dealership/other business ID
- Sealing wax/seal
- Postmarked postcard/envelope from out-of-town
- Buttons (especially those with motif, e.g., anchor, fleur-de-lis)
- Newspaper article, editorial, cartoon, etc.
- Party napkin
- Embroidered handkerchief
- Schematic from owner’s manual (e.g., lawn mower)
- Hand lens/magnifying glass
- Sheriff star (can obtain from discount/party store)
- Military patches, pins, badges
- Construction toy / builder’s blocks
- Cocktail umbrella
- Rechargeable battery
- Feathers
- Stamped leather/metal (could represent clothing detail)
- Miniature graduation cap (can obtain from discount/party store)
- Political pin/bumper sticker