



Tour Theme: Archaeology (grades 6 to 8)

Sub Theme: Native Americans

Post Visit Activity #1

Graffiti or Artifact?

Overview:

When does graffiti become an artifact?

Objectives:

- Understand the importance of preserving artifacts
- Observe petroglyphs attributed to the Anasazi of the Southwest.
- Refine understanding of similarities and differences between graffiti and artifacts.
- Students will choose to write creatively to tell the "story" depicted in the wall art or they may write creatively to tell about the circumstances under which the drawings were created and how they were completed.

Materials:

- Variety of images showing petroglyphs attributed to the Anasazi of southwestern United States.
- Images of graffiti
- Lined notebook paper
- pencils

Activity:

1. Review petroglyphs covering the definitions and identifying places where they have been found in and around southern Nevada (Red Rock Canyon and the Valley of Fire).
2. Distribute samples of the Anasazi wall art to small groups, or show to the whole group, allowing them time to observe and note details.
3. Distribute samples of the graffiti images.
4. Tell the students that they are to choose a drawing, or set of drawings, that they find interesting. They will then choose one of the following:
 - a. Write creatively to tell the story that the drawings represent. They must maintain the time setting appropriate to the time the petroglyphs were created or the time the graffiti was created..
 - b. Write to tell how the petroglyphs were created. If the student chooses this option he/she may require computer time to *briefly* research the process that was used for the art selected.
5. Direct the students to use the writing process to complete their work.

6. Share and/or publish student work as appropriate for your group (orally to whole group, publish a book, display, etc.).

Debrief Discussion:

1. Explain to the students that out in Red Rock Canyon there is a site where early “White” settlers started a sandstone quarry in the hopes of using the blocks for construction in Las Vegas. More specifically there is an area where some early Las Vegans carved their names into the sandstone.
2. Debate the following question: Are these carvings historic artifacts or graffiti? What is the difference (if any) between petroglyphs that you used for your activity vs. writing names on rocks? Discuss.
3. What criteria should be used to decide what is worthy of being kept as an artifact to represent **ancient** cultures? What criteria should be used to decide what is worthy of being kept as an artifact to represent **today’s** culture?