



Theme: Archaeology (Grades 6-8)

Pre-Visit Activity #2 Box of Mystery

Overview:

In this lesson, students will learn how to examine artifacts. Additionally, the activity is designed to simulate the discovery process through a problem-solving approach. While at the Springs Preserve, students will learn how archaeologists analyze artifacts in more detail.

Objectives:

- Students will describe what they see as they observe an artifact.
- Students will ask appropriate questions to gather needed information.
- Students will draw conclusions based on the information gathered.

Materials:

- 5-7 “artifacts”
- Box
- Paper
- Pencil

Activity:

1. Teacher will select five to seven “artifacts” to be observed. The more nondescript, the better, so that students will not be able to guess what they are. (Gather pieces of something that looks old, or a tool that students may not use, etc. Items from a junk pile might work great!)
2. Bring the “artifacts” into the classroom (have them already packed in a box - this seems to heighten their curiosity) and begin introducing the lesson.
3. Ask and discuss the following questions:
 - What is archaeology?
 - Has anyone seen the Indiana Jones movie?
 - What was he doing in the movie?

Explain that the movie depicts archaeology a little unrealistically, but that archaeologists do look for clues and try to find artifacts that tell a story about people, places, and events that took place in the past. They are detectives. When they find an object, they must ask a number of questions in search of answers. Tell the students that they are going to have the opportunity to be archaeologists or detectives by trying to figure out what is in their *Box of*

Mystery!

4. Separate students into groups of 5-7, depending on the size of the class and the number of "artifacts" previously gathered.
5. Pass out one artifact to each group. Tell the group that they have to quietly, using one piece of paper, answer the following, inquiry-based questions:
 - A. What does it look like?
 - (1) Describe its color
 - (2) Describe its size
 - (3) Describe its shape
 - (4) Describe its material (rock, bone, wood, metal, fabric, etc.)
 - B. What could it have been used for?
 - C. How old could it be?
 - (1) Describe its condition (effects of erosion, rust, decay, how fragile it is)
 - (2) Material (consider how fast it might age in a given environment)
 - (3) Your best estimation of age (pick a group)

1-10 years	11-20 years	21-50 years
51-75 years	76-100 years	101-200 years
201-500 years	501-1000 years	Over 1000 years
Over 2000 years	Over 3000 years	

- D. What do you think this artifact is?
6. You may choose to pass around all of the artifacts and repeat step 5 again.
7. After the groups have finished the assignment, discuss each group's answers as a whole class by examining one "artifact" at a time. Encourage students to ask questions and draw additional conclusions based on the information presented.

Discussion:

Conclude by discussing what *each group* might have and how they drew their conclusions. Accept any reasonable answer and remind them that when archaeologists find something they put clues together in much the same way.