

# THINKING LIKE AN ARCHAEOLOGIST

## *Useful Vocabulary*

**Archaeology:** the study of past human activity by finding and examining fossils and artifacts.

**Absolute Dating:** a technique that determines when an artifact was used or how long ago an event occurred.

**Analysis:** the process of studying and classifying artifacts, usually conducted in a laboratory after an excavation has been completed; to analyze an object and draw conclusions.

**Artifact:** any object made or modified by man.

**Attribute:** an observable characteristic or property of an object, such as weight, size, or colour.

**Chronology:** an arrangement of events in the order in which they occurred.

**Classification:** arrangement in groups or categories according to criteria.

**Context:** refers to an artifact, its location, surroundings, and relationship to other artifacts.

**Culture:** the customs, values, beliefs, and general patterns of behaviour of a particular group of people.

**Excavation:** the study of an archaeological site by removing the soil layer by layer.

**Fossils:** undisturbed remains of plants or animals that have changed into stone.

**Fragment:** a small piece broken off or separated from something.

**Preservation:** keeping something from harm, destruction or decay, especially artifacts, fossils, and sites related to our past.

**Relative Dating:** places an artifact or event in chronological order, but does not estimate from how long ago.

**Site:** any place that has remains of human use or occupation.

**Survey:** to examine the land to locate and record artifacts, fossils, and sites.

## *The Back Story*

It is the year 2325, the human race has survived the zombie apocalypse. Mankind is still in the process of rebuilding society and cleaning up their cities. The Bruins Archaeology Specialists Team have recently uncovered the room you are in right now. Using **absolute dating**, they were able to determine that the **artifacts** in the room were from about 300 years ago. The team began **surveying** the area by **excavating the site** and gathering any artifacts they could find to learn more about the **culture** that faced the zombie apocalypse. Some artifacts were **fragmented**, so archaeologists were not sure what they were right away. As part of their job, they documented the **attributes** of the fragments for **analysis** and **classification** later in the lab. The archaeologists must now study the fragments and its attributes to try to uncover what the objects are and what they could tell us about culture 300 years ago.

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## VERY INTERESTING QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

1. Would these archaeologists find enough evidence to determine that this room was part of a school? Consider what objects would have survived after almost 300 years.
2. After studying the artifacts that would have survived, what do you think the archaeologists would conclude about our culture?
3. Do you think archaeologists could come to any false (incorrect) conclusions about our culture? Why or why not?

## ASSIGNMENT: THINKING LIKE AN ARCHAEOLOGIST

➤ *Academic Expectations* (from the BC Curriculum)

Student can use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to: ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions.

*Step-by-Step Instructions* (check off box when completed)

**Artifact Record Sheet:** draw, fine-line, and colour a "photo" of an artifact fragment

- Find an object in the classroom and draw only a *fragment* of it. Make sure it is not too obvious, but not too simple or general.
- Choose an object that has shape, colour, and other details (*attributes*).

**Artifact Record Sheet *continued*:** describe the attributes of the artifact fragment

- Write at least 3-5 detailed attributes describing the appearance of the object, possible uses for it, or how it moves (if it does).
- Use the worksheet "Archaeology: Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together" to help you.

**Artifact Analysis Sheet**

- After drawing the fragment and writing the attributes, you will hand in your work and receive someone else's work that you must now study.
- Write a short paragraph or point-form full sentences with your thoughts and questions about the fragment and what it could be. State the reasons why you think it is that object using evidence (the attributes and *context*).
- Here are some sentence prompts to help you write your analysis:
  - "In my opinion..." / "According to my analysis..." / "After careful analysis..."
  - "According to photo evidence, it looks like..." / "Based on how it looks..."
  - "The fragment looks to be a part of...because..."
  - "I think the original object is...because it would fit perfectly with... / it makes sense that..."

*Your guess does NOT have to be right about the object to meet or exceed expectations! I am marking you on your ability to meet the academic expectation (see above).*

**Post-Excavation Record Sheet**

The excavation is now complete, all the surviving artifacts have been recovered, analyzed, and are now being *preserved*. The artifacts that have been recovered are all around you in this classroom or in your backpacks. What do these objects say about our culture and how we lived in 2015? *See handout for full question.*

*Hint:* other artifacts could be books, technology, writing, etc.; what similar objects would they have found in small or large numbers?