

## Classroom Culture

**Lesson Theme:** Material Culture

**Grade:** Intermediate Elementary

**Duration:** 2- 50 minute periods

**Process Skills:** Observation, Investigation, Prediction

**Materials:** 'Backpack' assemblage (prepared from home, including 'artifacts' to represent the teacher, students' 'artifacts' from home, overhead, writing journals, rulers, pens and pencils

### **Enduring Understandings:**

1. For thousands of years, human populations have left behind everyday objects that carry meaning.
2. Information about past cultures can be obtained by studying what people used in their everyday lives.
3. Archaeologists make predictions about how past people lived based on the material remains they left behind.
4. Culture is the beliefs, ideas, concepts and tools that help us understand and adapt to our world.

### **Guiding Questions:**

1. Why do archaeologists study artifacts?
2. What kinds of observations do archaeologists make about artifacts?
3. What might the objects that we use everyday tell others about our lives?
4. How is culture represented in an archaeological assemblage?
5. Why would some materials survive burial for 1,000 years while others would not?
6. Is studying past cultures through archaeology important?
7. What kinds of ideas, beliefs or tools are represented in our class culture?
8. If someone who did not know our class saw this collection, what might they think about us?
9. Why is it important not to disturb archaeological sites or pick up artifacts?

### **Critical Content:**

Archaeologists are scientists that investigate past cultures by looking at the things they left behind. Artifacts can tell us many things about how past people lived everyday. It is important not to disturb archaeological sites or artifacts in order to preserve information.

### **Standards:**

See State Standards.

## **Instructional Activities & Methods:**

### **Day One:**

- Begin by sharing the book Archaeologists Dig for Clues by Kate Duke.
- Create a concept map for the word ARTIFACT on the board. Leave the ideas up so that the words will be present throughout the exercise. (A good definition to work for is- An object made and used by humans for a specific purpose.
- Present the artifacts from the Backpack Assemblage. As students to describe what they see and try to think of something they might be able to know about the person who used this artifact. Pose the question "How do they know this information."  
- Possible suggestions for the assemblage: parts from everyday objects like CD players, MP3 players, caps to pens, hats, sandwich bags, water bottles
- Compile a list of student responses on the board/overhead.
- Write the sentence " \_\_\_\_\_ is an artifact from our school and it is used for \_\_\_\_\_." Have students fill in the sentence and dictate this onto a transparency.
- When everyone has had a chance to contribute, have students read aloud their sentence. Have you completed an accurate picture of your school?
- Ask students to bring in some artifact of their own from home. It may be left up to the student what they bring, provided the size is reasonable, not a toy and parents approve.

### **Day Two:**

- Arrange all of the students' artifacts on a table. Revisit the definition of artifact from yesterday. Discuss or have students write out observations. What does the entire collection tell us about us as a class? Where did they come from? Were they made at home, bought, traded? Are children the only people represented?
- With the entire class, brainstorm what artifacts of the classroom culture they think would survive if the room were suddenly buried for 1,000 years. Remove all artifacts from the table that the class believes would not survive and make observations about the collection that is left. How is this interpretation different from the entire assemblage? Does it represent the same things we listed for the first collection?

### **Culminating Performance Assessment:**

**What?** Analyze the functions of an artifact of material culture based on observations.

**Why?** To understand that predictions can be made about culture based on observation and investigation of artifacts.

### **How?**

1. Have each student select an object that is not their own. Provide students with an Artifact Form and have them record observations. Discuss instructions as a class for each entry on the form before beginning.
2. Students should be encouraged to be creative in their thinking. Its okay to invent a name for something provided they can explain why they chose it.
3. Each student will present their “theory” of what the artifact represents to the class and what it might tell us about the person to whom it belongs or what it could have been used for.

### **Assessment:**

Class Participation  
Presentation  
Writing sample

ARTIFACT IDENTIFICATION FORM

NAME OF OBJECT:

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION OF ARTIFACT:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LENGTH \_\_\_\_\_

WIDTH \_\_\_\_\_

WEIGHT \_\_\_\_\_

MATERIAL(S) MADE FROM:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

WHAT PART(S) OF THE ARTIFACT MIGHT SURVIVE IF BURIED AND WHY?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

POSSIBLE USES OF ARTIFACT:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

WHAT IT REPRESENTS/WHY IS IT SPECIAL? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DRAW A FRONT AND SIDE VIEW OF THE ARTIFACT: