



Piecing together the story Pot drop and reconstruction

Background notes:

Archaeologists often talk about their work as "putting together the pieces of a puzzle." Sometimes this takes on a literal meaning, like putting together the pieces of a ceramic pot. It also has a figurative meaning. Archaeology is a discipline that requires the input of many kinds of specialists. Each specialist adds a piece of the puzzle to the description of archaeological sites and materials. Each piece of information and each site is a piece of the puzzle of how people lived and how they may affect our lives today. In this lesson, students assemble a puzzle of ceramic sherds. This is an activity that an archaeologist would do in a lab. Students also learn about the problems archaeologists face when pieces of the puzzle are missing. In order to help preserve the pieces of our past, many countries, states, counties and cities have laws protecting archaeological and cultural resources. In the United States, all archaeological resources on public lands are protected and that that theft and destruction of archaeological resources is punishable by law. This lesson is in three Sessions.

Objective: Students will learn

That artistic motifs are repeated design elements or themes.

That archaeology is more than digging

That vandalism and looting damage the archaeological record and hamper our construction of the puzzle of the past.

To measure using the metric system

They will use observation and inference as they record their observations

To deduce inferences from there observations and defend them

Vocabulary:

Artifact: anything made or modified by people that can be easily moved.

Cultural resources: Prehistoric and historic properties, sites, artifacts and art.

Reparation: in archaeology, returning cultural objects and human remains to their regions of origin.

Sherd: a broken piece of pottery. A Rim Sherd is the top of the pot; A Base Sherd is the bottom of the pot and A Body Sherd has not indications of the pot's top or bottom

Trinominal: unique identifiers assigned to archaeological sites identifying the State, Area (often the County), and a number assigned to an archaeology site by the State Office of Historic Preservation.

Materials,

A sheet with designs and motifs from a culture you may be studying or from combination of ancient, historical or modern era you choose.

A small flower pot for each crew: (one to four students)

A small Paper Bag, for each crew: (one to four students)

White "School" glue for each crew: (one to four students)

An *Artifact Record form* for each crew: (one to four students)



HERITAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

An *Artifact Diameter form* for each crew: (one to four students)
A metric ruler for each crew: (one to four students)
Felt pens for decorating pot
Masking tape for each crew: (one to four students)
One kitchen or postal scale, set for metric weights
Illustration of ancient pottery with motifs

Procedure:

Session 1

1. Share motif illustrations and tell students that designs on pottery sometimes represented parts of a story, or important animals and plants and often were decorated with cultural motifs.
2. Explain that they will decorate a pot **for someone else and that they will NOT be keeping the pot they decorate!**
3. Have students decorate a pot using a motif and design with the provided felt pens.
4. Put decorated a pot put in a paper bag, and collect the bags.

Between Sessions

Drop (not throw) the bag on to a hard surface. Remove ONE of the broken pottery sherds. This represents what a looter have taken from a archaeological site.

Label the bags with a Crew number and a Trinomial. sample **CA** (state)- **Riv** (county) – **1230** (any three or four digit number)

Session 2

Procedures:

1. Pass out the : *Artifact Record Sheet* and the *Rim Charts* and give each crew a bag with a broken pot that was decorated by another crew
2. Have students start filling out the *Artifact Record Sheet*, using the Crew number and the Trinomial from the bag. Explain what a Trinomial is.
3. Have the students take a rim sherd and match its curve on the on the Rim Diameter sheet. Then enter the results.
4. Have them the check the *Ceramics* line on the *Type* section for the sheet.
5. Have the students put together the pot using the white glue and tape. The best way is use white glue and hold the pot together temporally with masking tape.
6. After the student start to notice that there are pieces missing reveal that you have a collection of pottery shards. Share that people who take artifacts from archaeological site are stealing evidence of the past and in doing so makes it more difficult for archaeology to tell the story of people in past. Offer to Repatriate the “looted” to help the students piece together their piece of the past. A representative from each crew can come to you and ask for their



piece to be Repatriated. Then you can give him/her the piece and explain the information from the “**Background notes**”

6. After the crews have the repatriated their piece, have, them to continue working on reconstructing the pots.

Session 3

1. Have the students complete the rest of the *Artifact Record Sheet*, including a sketch of their artifact.

2. After the students have recorded all their observations they need write their inferences on the *Significance* section, of the *Artifact Record Sheet*. (supply more paper if necessary)

3. Then they present their findings to you, or the peers. These findings will need to include the inferences they made about what their artifact. They also need to support their inferences.