

Lesson 3:

Shifting through Sherds

Subject: Science, Social Studies

Skills: knowledge, analysis, comprehension

Strategies: scientific method, discussion, comparison

Time: 45 minutes

Group: Any, groups of 2

Grade Level: 5-8

OBJECTIVE:

This activity should teach students to label and use ceramics to hypothesize what room the sherd came from in a house. This will help them experience the task of an archaeologist more fully.

BACKGROUND:

After excavating a site, archaeologists bring the artifacts that they have recovered back to the laboratory to be analyzed. Each artifact has its own provenience number so that the location of the material is known. At the lab, the artifacts are cleaned and perhaps washed to remove excess soil and other material. They are then separated into bags according to the unit in which they were recovered. Each unit of the site already has a special number or letter designation. A label is placed on each bag. The label contains the cataloging number, the number/letter combination, and other relevant information about the artifacts. Artifacts are later marked so that they may be removed from their bags and examined further.

Vocabulary:

Cataloging: method archaeologists use to identify the location and other relevant information about an artifact once it has been removed from a site. Each artifact is labeled by directly writing an identification on its surface.

Classification: the method archaeologists use to organize artifacts into groups based on certain standards

PVA: a liquid solution spread on an artifact so that it may be written on (we will not be using this in our activity.)

Sherds: broken pieces of pottery

RESOURCES/MATERIALS:

The following materials will be needed to conduct this activity: pencils, black thin permanent markers, several pieces of inexpensive ceramics, ten one-gallon Ziplock bags, several smaller plastic bags, handout 1.

Teacher Preparation:

Teachers should obtain several pieces of inexpensive pottery from dollar stores or yard sales. It is

even better if the pieces are already broken. There should be an array of ceramics, but all should be in the second section of the handout (flowerpots, plates, bowls, cups, etc, all easily obtainable). Teachers should break the ceramics by either dropping them or using a hammer. For safety purposes, goggles and gloves are recommended when doing this. Any tiny pieces of ceramics should be discarded, as they may be dangerous to the students. Any sharp edges of the ceramics should be sanded, using sandpaper, to prevent any harm to the students when they are handling the fragments. If this is too time consuming, EVERY broken edge of pottery should be wrapped with masking tape. This will prevent possible injury to the students. Be advised, EDGES ARE SHARPER THAN THEY APPEAR! After this, the instructor should place the sherds in the ten, one-gallon bags. Each bag should contain relatively the same material, (i.e., one bag that is to be from a kitchen should contain portions of plates, cups and bowls, while a bag from the outside of a house may contain parts of a ceramic watering can and flower pots) but each bag should also possess sherds of pottery that clearly did not belong in that unit. For instance, the kitchen bag may contain two pieces of jewelry boxes from a bedroom. Students will hypothesize about the origins of these sherds.

PROCEDURE:

- 1) The instructor should prepare each of 10 workstations before the students come to class. Each station should have a bag of sherds, a fine tipped permanent marker and handout 1¹.
- 2) Students should use the marker to write an identification number on the bag. The number should be "Name of the school"-01, or "..."-02, depending on the number of the group. Then by using the handout students should place this CATALOGING number on the line labeled "Cataloging number." For example, a number could be "My School-08" for group number 8 in the class.
- 3) Students should empty all the sherds from the bags and use the markers to write their specific cataloging number on the inside surface of each of the sherds.
- 4) Now use the handout. Students should create their own classifications for the sherds based on physical characteristics. One classification may be "White and glazed." The students should

¹ Before this activity the teacher should test the markers to see if they do write on the pottery. Also, nail polish remover should remove the marker from the ceramics if the teacher chooses to conduct this activity again. Experiment with the markers to see which works best.

write their classifications on the lines below "Classification." Students should also count the sherds in each classification and write the number to the right, where the handout specifies.

- 5) Now have the children total the amount of sherds and place this number on the "Total" line.
- 6) Next, in section two of the handout, have the students count the number of plate sherds, potsherds, soap dish sherds, etc, and place that number on the line to the left.
- 7) In the third section of the handout, students will choose which they believe the ceramics came from. They will do this by writing the number of sherds on the lines provided. If there are two sherds from bowls and one from a picture frame, then the student will write 2 next to "bowl" and 1 next to "picture frame." Because there should be a majority of one type of sherd in each bag, the student should be able to guess from which room of the house the pieces originated. The children will circle the room and hand in their activity paper.

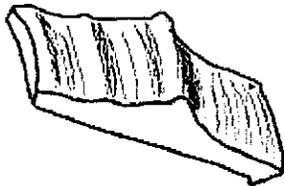


CLOSURE:

Groups should present their findings to the class.

EXTENSION:

If time allows, have students try to piece their sherds together with the fragments from other groups. Groups may also trade bags before the group presentation and check if the other students achieve the same results.



Names: _____

Cataloguing Number: _____

Classifications:

Number of Sherds:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

TOTAL NUMBER OF SHERDS: _____

Section 2: Count the number of sherds and
place this number on the line

_____ Plates

_____ Picture Frames

_____ Cups

_____ Jewelry Boxes

_____ Bowls

_____ Soap Dishes

_____ Flowerpots

_____ Toothbrush Holders

_____ Watering Cans

_____ Candle Holders

_____ Figurines

_____ Other

Section 3: Count how many different items that
the sherds represent. Put this number
on the line.

KITCHEN

_____ Plates

_____ Cups

_____ Bowls

BATHROOM

_____ Soap Dishes

_____ Toothbrush Holders

OTHER (specify)

GARDEN

_____ Flowerpots

_____ Watering Cans

BEDROOM

_____ Figurines

_____ Jewelry Boxes

_____ Picture Frames

Names: Sample

Cataloging Number: IUP-01

Classifications:

	Number of Sherds
1) <u>Pink, Yellow, Shiny Ceramic</u>	<u>2</u>
2) <u>Light/Dark Blue, Unfired Ceramic</u>	<u>2</u>
3) <u>Pink, Green Hard Ceramic</u>	<u>1</u>
4) _____	_____
5) _____	_____
6) _____	_____

TOTAL NUMBER OF SHERDS: 5

Section 2: # of Sherds

_____ Plates	<u>1</u> Picture Frames
_____ Cups	<u>2</u> Jewelry Boxes
_____ Bowls	<u>1</u> Soap Dishes
_____ Flowerpots	_____ Toothbrush holders
_____ Watering cans	_____ Candle holders
_____ Figurines	_____ Other

Section 3: # of Items Represented

KITCHEN

- _____ Plates
- _____ Cups
- _____ Bowls

BATHROOM

- 1 Soap Dishes
- _____ Toothbrush holders

OTHER _____

GARDEN

- _____ Flowerpots
- _____ Watering cans

BEDROOM

- _____ Figurines
- 1 Jewelry Boxes
- 1 Picture Frames

