



# Archaeology

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**Historical Context:** Archaeology is the study of human activity in the past, through the use of recovery and interpretation of artifacts (objects left behind by people). Archaeologists use their five senses to gather clues about artifacts, and then compare what they know to what they have found in order to tell the story of the people they are studying. Observation is very important to archaeology; everything around the object gives clues; where it is found, what is found nearby, the climate of the area. The object itself also tells a story; what it is made of, what it looks like, what condition it is in, how it is decorated, and what writing is on it. Archaeologists look at all of this together and hypothesize what the object is, who made it, why it was made, and when it was made.

**Time:** One class period (40 minutes)

**Correlation to Standards:** World History, Visual Arts

**Materials Needed:**

Artifact Analysis Worksheet for each student,  
Each group will need: two photocopies of artifacts, crayons or colored pencils, scissors, a plastic baggie, plain paper, glue stick. Laminated object description for each artifact to be used.

**Objective:** Students will use their senses to identify characteristics of an artifact. Students will create a hypothesis about their artifact based on their inquiry.

**Task:**

Divide students into pairs.

Teacher should hand out the Artifact Analysis Worksheet to each student and read through it.

Review vocabulary and meaning of each question before giving further parts of lesson.

Each student will need an artifact, crayons or colored pencils and scissors.

Students will color their artifact, and then cut it into pieces.

(Teacher should remind them they are making puzzle pieces.)

After each pair of students have colored and cut their artifacts, the pieces should be mixed together in the baggie. (The



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teacher could remove a piece or add random pieces to increase difficulty.)

The teacher will mix up the baggies between groups so each pair of students now has a new artifact. Students will remove the pieces, sort the objects, and when they are finished recreating their artifact they should glue it onto their blank paper.

After the student has assembled and glued their artifact they will complete their Artifact Analysis Worksheet.

When all students have finished this, the teacher will read the actual artifact identification, and have the students try to match their artifact based on their analysis.

**Assessment:** Teacher can collect the worksheets to check for understanding of procedure.

**Extension:** Do a sandbox dig, collect pieces of “artifacts” from students and bury them in a sandbox. Have students use archaeological techniques, measuring, drawing, interpretation, and analysis to conduct a “real” dig.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# Artifact Analysis Worksheet

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## 1. Type of Artifact

Describe the material from which it might be made: bone, pottery, metal, wood, stone, glass, fabric, paper, other material.

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## 2. Special Qualities of the Artifact

Describe how it looks or feels: shape, color, texture, size, weight, any writing or pictures on it.

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## 3. Possible Uses or Function

a. What might it have been used for?

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b. Who might have used it?

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c. When might it have been used?

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d. Where might it have come from?

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## 4. What Does the Artifact Tell Us?

a. What does the artifact tell us about the technology in the time it was made?

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b. What might be a similar object today?

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# Archaeology: Inquiry into the Past

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## Lesson Images

Shabti in everyday dress

Faience

Dynasty 19, 1292-1185 B.C.

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Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Cogswell, 1958.32.30

Bread Mold

Clay

Dynasty 18, 1550-1292 B.C.

Albany Institute of History & Art, 1958.7.1

Although Egyptians baked bread in a variety of shapes (triangle, ovoid, bell-shaped), the conical loaves of emmer wheat bread seem to have been among the most common. This conical bread mold was excavated at Deir El-Bahri, Thebes by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1930-31.

Pitcher

“Egyptian Alabaster” (Calcite)

New Kingdom

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Gift of Heinrich Medicus, 2013.1.13

This shape of this carved stone pitcher resembles a type of flask known as an askos. These were containers made of pieces of leather sewn together. Here the characteristic rectangular shape and been copied, and even the bands of thread holding the sides together are carved in the stone. The Egyptians delighted in copying the form of one material into another, and there are also similar pottery versions of the askos.

Tomb relief

Limestone

New Kingdom

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Gift of Heinrich Medicus, 2013.1.6

This relief which would have decorated the walls of a tomb chapel, shows rows of servants bringing offerings to the tomb. Such depictions would magically serve to sustain the dead, in case actual offerings were not delivered to the chapel by the family or priests.



# Archaeology: Inquiry into the Past

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## Relief of a granary

Limestone

Egyptian, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 11

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Gift of Heinrich Medicus, 2013.1.22

The ancient Egyptians measured their wealth in terms of grain. The estates of Royalty and high officials had large granaries, which were filled with wheat and barley that was used as currency as well as food. This relief probably comes from the temple of Mentuhotep II at Deir el Bahri and shows a man carrying a sack of grain up a flight of stairs to empty it into the open top of the grain silo.

## Canopic Jar

“Egyptian Alabaster” (Calcite)

Egyptian, Late Period, Dynasty 26

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Gift of Heinrich Medicus, 2013.1.25 and 2013.1.26

In the practice of mummification, the internal organs were removed and in four separate containers called Canopic jars. First appearing during the Old Kingdom, these jars were simple vessels with flat lids, but were later associated with four sons of Horus. They are: Imsety in human form, who protected the liver, as in this example along with the jackal, Duamutef, who guarded the stomach; Hapi the baboon-headed deity that safeguarded the lungs and, the hawk-headed, Qebehsenuf who protected the intestines.

## Votive Relief

Limestone

Egyptian, Ptolemaic Period, 332-30 B.C.

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Gift of Heinrich Medicus, 2013.1.27

This small relief contains an image of a goddess. She wears a divine wig and headband, but no crown to identify her. Such small carvings are known from a number of examples dating to late in Egyptian history. They have been suggested to be sculptor's studies, but some scholars believe that they were made as temple offerings instead.



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Shabti  
Wood

Egyptian, New Kingdom,  
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Gift of Heinrich Medicus, 2013.1.29

Shabtis first become common in the New Kingdom and served as magical substitutes for the deceased in case they were asked to perform any chores in the next life. These early figurines could be made from a wide variety of materials, stone, pottery, faience or wood, which was often painted.

Canopic jar lid  
Pottery

Egyptian, New Kingdom  
Albany Institute of History & Art  
Gift of Heinrich Medicus, 2013.1.3

In the Middle and early New Kingdom, Canopic jars had four human heads and were made out of a wide variety of materials, pottery, faience, and stone.

Fragment of Stela (winged sun disk, Anubis, and scarab)  
Painted wood

Egypt, Dynasty 21, 1069-945 B.C.  
Albany Institute of History & Art

Gift of Dr. Peter Lacovara in honor of Erika Sanger  
Stela, or Stelae, were commemorative plaques serving as tombstones, boundary markers, votives, or commemorative monuments.

Funerary Bowl  
Faience

Dynasty 12, 1985-1773 B.C.  
Collection of Dr. Peter Lacovara

Lizard Sarcophagus  
Bronze

Late Dynastic to Ptolemaic Period, 664-30 BE B.C.  
Collection of Douglas L. Cohn, DVM



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Jar  
Ceramic  
Dynasty 18, 1550-1292 B.C.  
Albany Institute of History & Art, X1940.225

Seal Impression of King Akhenaten  
Clay  
Dynasty 18, 1352-1336 B.C.  
Albany Institute of History & Art  
Gift of Mrs Howard B. Paine, X1940.58.7b

Khepri (winged scarab)  
Painted wood  
Late Dynastic or Early Ptolemaic Period, 525-200 B.C.  
Albany Institute of History & Art, x1940.600.1006