The Fourth “R” — Archaeology

“One day we had women visitors with different jobs come talk to us. The one that impressed me the most was the archaeologist. She talked about her many adventures. She also said that anyone can be an archaeologist even at any age. I learned that you should never quit but keep trying harder.”

— Eden Jimenez, 5th grade student at Elvira Elementary, Tucson, AZ

Archaeology — it captures our imagination, encourages our curiosity, and stimulates our sense of wonder. Questions about the past engage both our intellect and emotions. Archaeology excites and motivates students.

Archaeology is that powerful “hook” that draws students into questioning and learning. Beyond satisfying multiple state-based content standards, benchmarks, and performance objectives, studying archaeology provides students with a rich awareness of cultural diversity and a sensitivity that leads to an understanding of multicultural perspectives.

Utilizing archaeology as a teaching tool...
- energizes and enriches a wide variety of subject areas.
- easily addresses curriculum standards in social studies, science, language arts, math, workplace skills, and art.
- encourages the use of problem solving and critical thinking skills.
- exercises inductive and deductive reasoning.
- provides an ideal structure for cooperative learning activities.

For the student, archaeology
- sparks the imagination.
- integrates classroom learning and relates it to the real world.
- provides a link to the past.
- empowers him or her with the responsibility of protecting the past and contributing to the future.

Archaeology is the systematic study of human culture through material remains.

Did You Know?


A majority (90%) of respondents in a recent Harris Interactive poll believe students should learn about archaeology and how it contributes to our knowledge of the past as part of their school curriculum.

Above: Students from the Native American Studies class at Challenger Middle School, Tucson, Arizona.
Archeology can be used as a thematic topic to teach subjects from Art to Zoology. Try using archaeology to:

- draw connections between the real world and mathematics using geometry, statistical analysis, measurement, and/or problem solving.
- teach ethics and civics through student-initiated research on historic preservation laws that protect our nation’s endangered and irreplaceable archaeological sites.
- formulate and test scientific hypotheses using classroom-based activities that focus on gathering and analyzing archaeological data.
- bring American history alive in your classroom using recent archaeological discoveries combined with documented histories from Jamestown, Colonial Williamsburg, Valley Forge, or Monticello.

Teacher’s Toolbox

Archaeology Lesson Plans
- Teaching Archaeology: A Sampler for Grades 3-12
  www.saa.org/pubEdu/sampler
- Archaeology & Public Education Newsletter, “Education Station”
  archaeology lesson plans and activities
  www.saa.org/PubEdu/A&PE/lessons.html
- Teaching With Historic Places
  www.cr.nps.gov/NR/twhp/descrip.htm

Books and Magazines
- Archaeology and You
  www.saa.org/publications/archandyou
- Archaeology: The Comic (Johannes Loubser)
  www.altamirapress.com
- Archaeology Magazine
  www.archaeology.org
- Dig — the archaeology magazine for kids
  www.digonsite.com

Organizations
- Society for American Archaeology
  www.saa.org 202-789-8200
- National Park Service
  www.cr.nps.gov/aad/public
  and www.cr.nps.gov/archeology.htm 202-354-2100
- Society for Historical Archaeology
  www.sha.org 856-224-0995
- Archaeological Institute of America
  www.archaeological.org 617-353-9361

Teacher Training
- Project Archaeology
  www.blm.gov/heritage/project_archaeology.htm

Volunteer Opportunities
- National Park Service
  www.cr.nps.gov/aad/public/archvol.htm
- Passport in Time (USDA Forest Service)
  www.passportintime.com

Audio and Video
- The Archaeology Channel
  www.archaeologychannel.org

Web Sites
- About.com Archaeology Web Site
  www.archaeology.about.com

Society for American Archaeology
900 Second Street NE #12, Washington, DC 20002-3557
Tel: 202-789-8200  Email: public_edu@saa.org  www.saa.org