

Unit 6, Lesson 3: Artifact Analysis

Maryland Social Studies Standards and Framework

Standard: Social Studies Skills and Processes

Topic: Acquire Social Studies information

Standard: Peoples of the Nations and World

Topic: Elements of Culture

MCCR Grade 4

MCCR Standards: SL.4.2, SS.6.1

Objective(s):

Students will:

- Make and record observations.
- Define culture.
- Compare and describe the elements of culture including shelter, recreation, education, oral traditions, art, music, and language of Native American societies

Essential Questions:

How does culture influence our lives?

Grade Level:

3rd – 5th

Overview:

This lesson directs students to examine primary sources with a critical eye to uncover their meanings. One way of doing this is through artifact analysis. By completing an analysis, students will gain an understanding of how primary sources hold clues to understanding our shared history and the challenges we encounter when trying to understand them.

Teacher Background:

Primary sources directly connect people to the past by linking them with the people that originally created or used them and the context in which they existed. These sources include printed materials, the physical environment, material culture (artifacts), art and photographs, electronic media recordings, and oral history. Primary sources can contain valuable information that gives historians an otherwise unseen glimpse of life in a particular place during a particular time. Examination of these sources often reveals details of events, settings, culture, or descriptions that may not have otherwise been documented.

Artifacts give insight into a group's culture. They can reveal information about a group's customs, religious practices, languages, foodways, social relationships, institutions, and technology. This learned behavior that is shared among a group of people is culture. Artifacts come in many forms. An item does not have to be worth a lot of money, extremely rare, or even intact to be an artifact. It only needs to have been made, used, or changed by people. A pottery sherd, a pile of broken oyster shells, or even the burned charcoal left from a campfire are all artifacts because they are all items made, used or changed by human activity.

Lesson Procedure:

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1. Present definitions of ‘culture’ and ‘artifacts’.
2. Select four to five items from the trunk. (see Materials list).
3. Divide students into small groups and give each group one artifact and the Artifact Analysis worksheet for this lesson.
4. Give the students 15 minutes to analyze their artifact using the questions on the worksheet and then write their conclusions.
5. Next, select one group at a time to present their findings to the class and explain the reasons for their conclusions.

Materials:

Suggested Artifacts

- celt
- hand drill
- gourd bowl
- elk billet
- bone awl
- bone pin game

Artifact Analysis Worksheet