

## Before Your Visit: Lesson #4

# Digging for Clues!

(Expected Class Sessions to Complete: 1)

### Objectives:

Students will understand the importance of identifying soil levels during archeological excavations and the importance of artifact province.

### Materials:

- Copies of the Digging for Clues Answers in Stratigraphy worksheet for each student
- Pictures of stratigraphy during the 2003 excavation at the National Constitution Center

### Standards Correlation:

Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

\*\*Note: Standards listed are extrapolated from Grade6 CC History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects; the lessons can be adapted for grades 5-12, refer to corresponding standards for your particular grade level.

CCRST (6-8).4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

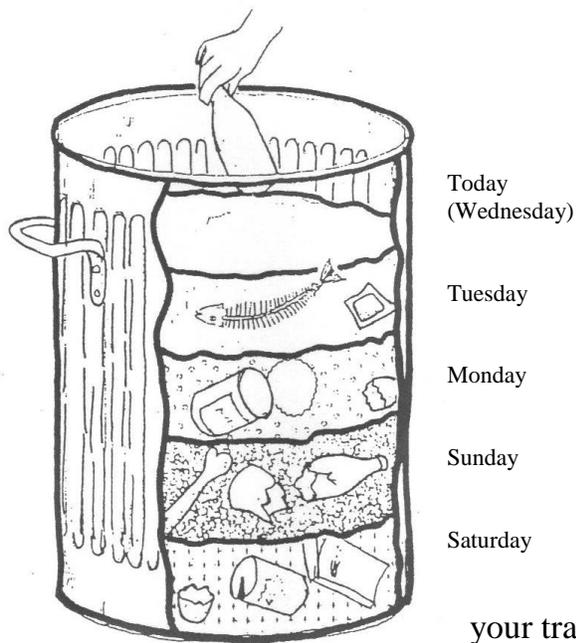
CCRST (6-8).7 Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table).

CCRH (6-8).7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

### Introduction:

Share the following information with the students:

One of the most important aspects of an archeological study is the scientific excavation of the site. This is often done by looking at an artifact's location in relation to soil layers, features, and other artifacts. Archeology itself is done by carefully removing soil layer by layer or by contexts and diligently recording what is found. Once a site has been excavated, the resource and contexts are gone.



Courtesy of the Baltimore County Center for Archeology

Generally, the level of soil closest to the surface of a site will contain evidence of the most recent activity. As you move down through the soil layers, accounts of older activity can be observed. This can change if later inhabitants of the area disturbed the soil by construction, farming, or another destructive activity. Likewise, natural events like a flood can also disturb the strata or soil layers.

With your class, go back to the first lesson where you asked your students “What can people learn about you by looking in your trash?” Only this time, talk about dating your trash for the week. The oldest trash will be in the bottom of the trash can and the trash from today will be at the top.

Procedure:

Tell the students that they get the opportunity to analyze a site by looking at the stratigraphy. They will need to look at the information they are given and make hypothesis about what happened at that site. Hand out the “Digging for Clues, Answers in Stratigraphy” worksheet and give the students time to work on it. You may also have them work in groups. Once the students have completed the worksheet, go over their answers as a class to see if everyone is in agreement.

Closing:

With the class, examine the pictures of stratigraphy during the 2003 excavation at the National Constitution Center. Have a discussion about what the archeologists doing the dig may learn using the different soil layers.



3. Indicate the difference between the human activities and the natural events.

4. How can you tell time has passed? What clues do you see?

5. What other observations or conclusions can you make?



# Post-Visit Extension Activities

The following extension activities may be utilized as follow-up to your visit to Independence National Historical Park, or for assessment purposes.

1. Create a brochure on Dexter for visitors to Independence National Historical Park. Be sure to include the contributions of archeology in learning about this man.
2. Write a letter to the editor about the importance of archeology and historic preservation. Make it specific to a site in your city if possible.
3. Research other kinds of archeology (besides urban archeology). Examples include industrial, underwater, experimental, and classical archeology. What are the similarities and differences to historical archeology in an urban setting?
4. Go back to the biography you wrote about James Dexter and learn about the events that happened during his lifetime like the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, Philadelphia becoming the nation's capital, the yellow fever epidemic, the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, and the US Government moving to Washington, D.C.. Then rewrite your Dexter biography adding in the new information you learned about the time period.
5. Revisit the biography you wrote about James Dexter and fill in more details about what went on in his household using the information you learned that archeologists found out by excavating the site of his house. (Remember the lesson you completed during your field trip to Independence National Historical Park's Archeologist's in the Making Learning Lab.)
6. Use the information you have learned from both the pre-visit lessons and your visit to Independence National Historical Park to write a resume for James Dexter.
7. Look for examples of archeology in popular culture such as movies, books, and television. Then, using your understanding of what archeology is and what archeologists do, write a commentary describing if your example is an accurate portrayal of archeology.

# Vocabulary

**Anthropology**- The study of the origin, the behavior, and the physical, social, and cultural development of humans. Anthropology studies humanity from the earliest times up to the present. Anthropology is broken into four subcategories: archeology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, and physical anthropology.

**Archeological “Context”**- Archeologists use the term “context” to describe the observable stratigraphic units, which include specific layers or deposits of soil, or features such as post molds. Archeologists dig according to the different contexts that they find within the site, starting with the excavation of the most recently deposited context and moving back in time or deeper in the ground. Artifacts are bagged, analyzed and eventually stored according to context. Artifacts within each context can be used to date the context and help to determine the date or timeline of the history of the entire site.

**Archeologist**- Someone who uses scientific methods to study the material remains of past human life and activities. As scholars and scientists, archeologists do not collect artifacts for profit or personal use.

**Archeology** (also spelled archaeology in the U.S.) - The scientific study of how people lived in the past through analysis of material remains uncovered during scientific excavations or digs.

**Artifact**- Anything made and /or used by humans, including tools, containers, and food remains. Buildings are also artifacts, but archeologists usually apply the term “artifact” only to portable items.

**Excavation**- An archeological dig.

**Feature**- A non-portable artifact that cannot be moved without destroying it. Examples of features include wells, privy pits, walls, and fence posts.

**Historical Archeology**- The study of archeological sites from the modern period in conjunction with historical records and other kinds of information.

**Material Culture**- A term given to objects that people use on a daily basis that reveal facts about their lives.

**Post Mold**- A type of feature; a circular stain left in the ground after a wooden post has decayed. It usually indicates the former existence of a house or fence.

**Primary Source-** Made by people who actually saw and wrote about a historical place or activity at the time when that activity happened.

**Provenience-** A specific location where an artifact or feature is found in the ground.

**Secondary Source-** Made by people who learned about the place of events from someone else or by looking at primary sources.

**Stratigraphy-** Used as a relative dating technique to assess the sequence of artifact position .

**Urban Archeology-** Urban archeology usually occurs when land is being cleared for new buildings or older buildings are being torn down. Archeologists are called to excavate the sites in order to collect and preserve the artifacts. This type of archeology is many times considered a rescue excavation because of the time pressure of the builders and construction crews.

# Resources for Teachers and Students

## Websites

<http://www.nps.gov/archeology/sites/npSites/franklincourt.htm>

Learn about archeology at Franklin Court. This website has information on the basics of archeology all related to Benjamin Franklin and life at Franklin Court.

<http://www.sha.org/>

The Society for Historical Archeology's website has a special section for kids to learn about careers in Archeology.

<http://www.nps.gov/archeology/public/kids/index.htm>

Here you will find activities, resources, and much more for encouraging a child's interest in archeology as well as encouraging stewardship for archeological heritage.

## Books

*Archaeology for Young Explorers: Uncovering History at Colonial Williamsburg* by Patricia Samford and David L. Ribblett. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (1999).

*Archeology for Kids: Uncovering the Mysteries of Our Past* by Richard Panchyk. Chicago Review Press (2001).

*Breaking Ground, Breaking Silence: The Story of New York's African Burial Ground* by Joyce Hansen and Gary McGowan. Henry Hold & Company (1998).

*The Buried Past: An Archaeological History of Philadelphia* by John L. Cotter, Daniel G. Roberts, and Michael Parrington. University of Pennsylvania Press (1992).

*The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker* edited by Elaine Foreman Crane. Northwest University Press (1991).