

# Archaeologist: People of the Stone Age

## Adventure Description:

In this adventure, students will think like an archaeologist and analyze artifacts from the Stone Age.

## Activity

Teacher note: This activity should be completed across two days. Complete Steps 1-3 on the first day and Steps 4-5 on the second day.

### Step 1: Background on the Stone Age and Archaeology (5 minutes)

- Show [Video: People of the Stone Age](#).
- Explain to students that when people speak of pre-history or prehistoric history, they are talking about a historic period that begins with the appearance of humans. This took place almost five million years ago!
- As a class, discuss reasons why it can be difficult to understand what life was like from thousands of years ago. Examples include:
  - There are no written records for the Prehistory era.
  - Information often comes from grave sites that may have been disturbed.
  - Artifacts from archaeological sites are stolen or ruined.
  - Archaeological dig sites can be ruined due to weather or vandalism.
  - Lack of written records means some questions are difficult to answer.
- Explain that professionals use artifacts to study prehistoric history. Show [Handout: Artifacts to Study the Stone Age](#). Discuss how professionals can analyze artifacts to understand how humans lived a long time ago. For example, professionals can look at tools to see how they developed and changed over time. For instance, humans have used different tools for fishing over time. In the beginning, fish hooks were made from whatever materials could be found such as sea snail shells that were shaped into a sharp hook. Later on, fish hooks were made from animal bones and horns as well as wood. The hooks were changed as needed. Bigger hooks were used to catch bigger fish, while smaller hooks were used for small types of fish. Later, fishing nets were made from roots or wild grasses that were woven. The nets could catch larger numbers of fish.
- Ask students what professionals can learn by looking at tools that humans used throughout time (e.g., how did tools change shape? What kinds of materials were used to make the tools? What skills might have been needed for a person to make a tool, such as a clay pot or an axe? How did tools change as people learned more skills? For example, could tools have more than one part or have decoration added?)

### Step 2: Activity Set Up (5 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will be studying artifacts to learn more about the Stone Age. Students will create replicas of artifacts and then switch artifacts with other students and analyze what they tell us about life during the Stone Age.
- Provide students with [Handout: Creating Artifacts](#). As a class, read through the handout.
- Provide each student with the following materials:
  - one card from [Handout: Information Cards for Students](#)
  - Clay or play doh

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- Assortment of art supplies and building materials (e.g., toothpicks, popsicle sticks, recycled boxes, tape, scissors, construction paper, stamp pad)

### Step 3: Creating Artifacts and Reports (30+ minutes)

- Have students complete steps 1-2 on the handout.
- As students are working, ask the following questions:
  - What can tools from the Stone Age tell us about the people who lived during this period?
  - Why is it important to analyze how tools have changed over time?
  - How can the discovery of a new tool change professionals' understanding of history?
- Teacher notes: When students finish writing their reports, they should cut them off of their handout and give them to you. Store the reports in a safe place until the next class. When students finish creating their artifacts, instruct students where to place them in the classroom so they be used during the next class.

### Step 4: Analyzing Artifacts (20+ minutes)

- Explain to students that now they will pretend they are archaeologists who are analyzing artifacts from the Stone Age. First, students will look at an artifact without any background information. They will fill out a report about what they think the artifact means. Then, they will receive the notes from another archaeologist that has been studying the same type of artifact in the field. They will fill out the report again add any information they have discovered about their artifact.
- Have students switch artifacts with one another.
- Then, provide each student with [Handout: Analyzing Artifacts](#).
- Explain to students that they will first analyze the artifact they were given without having additional information that came from the identification card associated with it. This means students will only be able to make guesses on what the artifact is and will not receive a report with information about the artifact and what it was used for.
- Have students complete step 1 on the handout. Students should learn as much as then can from the artifact. While students are working, ask them the following questions:
  - How sure are you that what you've observed about your artifact is correct?
  - What can you tell about the activity associated with the artifact?
- Then, explain to students that their artifact has a code on it. They should look for the four digit code and use their code to match their artifact up with the notes taken by another archaeologist that has been studying similar artifacts.
- Once they have the notes from the other archaeologist, students should go back and change or add to their own notes.
- While students are working, ask them the following questions:
  - Why do historians need archaeologists to help them understand prehistory?
  - In your opinion, what might be the most important tool developed in prehistory?
  - How did early people adapt, or learn to live in their environments?

### Step 5: Class Discussion (5 minutes)

- Ask students to share their experience about trying to understand an artifact with and without the data on the identification card.
- Ask students to come up with a claim as a class about how archeologists use information and findings to plan upcoming work. (e.g. what they have discovered might prompt them to ask further questions and plan further research)

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## Materials List

### Provided online:

- Video: People of the Stone Age
- Handout: Artifacts to Study the Stone Age
- Handout: Creating Artifacts
- Handout: Analyzing Artifacts
- Handout: Information Cards for Students

### Not Provided Online:

- Art and building supplies (e.g., toothpicks, popsicle sticks, recycled boxes, tape, scissors, construction paper, stamp pad)
- Clay or Play-doh

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