

Archaeologist: Spanish Missions in Texas

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, students will think like an archaeologist and analyze artifacts that tell us about life in a Texas Spanish mission. Then you will create a database entry to record your findings.

Activity

Teacher Note: This activity is long and can be completed across multiple days. You can complete Steps 1-3 on one day, and Steps 4-5 on another day.

Step 1: Background Information on Archaeologists and Learning About Artifacts (5 minutes)

- Show [Video: Spanish Missions](#).
- Provide each student with [Handout: Spanish Missions Sources](#). As you review the handout discuss the following:
 - What was the purpose of the Spanish missions? (e.g., to convert Native Americans to Catholicism, to establish Spanish presence in North America)
 - Why did the Spanish missions need to be self-supporting? (e.g., missions were isolated so planting of crops, raising livestock, using Native American labor to help build buildings, fences and animal pens, missions were located near a water source were all needed to survive)
 - How did the missions allow Spanish and Native American groups to learn from each other? (e.g., Spanish taught Native Americans about their religion and culture, Spanish learned construction techniques from the Native Americans, adapted their architecture to use materials available in the southwest)
 - What were the negative impacts of the Spanish missions? (missions were destroyed by hostile Native Americans, missionaries killed, Native Americans discouraged from practicing their religion, also exposed to disease)
- As a class, review that an archaeologist is a person who studies artifacts to learn about people and places from a long time ago. Artifacts are objects that are made by humans. For example, coins, tools, or toys are examples of artifacts. Ask students why an archaeologist would study artifacts.
- Discuss how artifacts can provide us with clues about how people lived a long time ago. Because we cannot talk to people who lived hundreds of years ago, we study artifacts to learn about what life was like long ago.
- Explain to students that archaeologists use databases to organize the information they learn about different topics. Show [Handout: Examples of Databases](#). Ask students why archaeologists would use databases. (e.g, to collaborate with other professionals to analyze artifacts, to look at artifacts that are held in museums located in different parts of the country or world, to keep track of a collection to see what is in it).

Step 2: Activity Set Up (5 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will work first in groups and create artifacts used by people in different colonies. Then, they will switch artifacts with another group and analyze what they mean.
- Provide each student with [Handout: Steps to Create and Analyze Artifacts](#). As a class, read through the steps.
- Next, divide students into groups. Provide each group with a card from [Handout: Cards for Students](#). Explain that each group will create 4 artifacts based on the information on the card they received.

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- Provide each group with the following materials: pieces of cardboard, popsicle sticks, construction paper, tape, scissors, and other art/building supplies based on what is available in your classroom.
- Teacher Note: If you have more than 5 groups of students, give 2 groups the same card.

Step 3: Creating Artifacts (20+ minutes)

- Have students work in their groups to create their artifacts and their labels that will go on their artifacts.
- As students are working, ask the following questions:
 - What materials will you use to make your artifacts look realistic?
 - How do artifacts provide clues about life in the Spanish missions?
 - What would happen if archaeologists did not find any artifacts that tell us about life in the Spanish missions.

Step 4: Analyzing Artifacts and Creating a Database Entry (20+ minutes)

- Have each group complete Step 2, switching artifacts with another group.
- Once groups switch artifacts, have them fill out Step 3 on their handout. As students are working, ask the following:
 - Why would archaeologists want to create a database of artifacts that they find?
 - If you are not sure what an artifact is used for what additional information would you need to figure out its purpose?
- When students are finished analyzing their artifacts, provide them with the correct key from [Handout: Answer Keys](#).
- Optional: Have groups determine if they were correct in identifying where the artifacts were from and what they mean. Have students create a digital database of their artifacts on Google Drive. Create a shared fold titled "Digital Database of Artifacts from Spanish Missions." Then, have students take pictures of their database forms and upload the pictures of the artifacts they analyzed. If multiple classes complete this activity, created a shared database. Students can look through others' databases and better understand that archaeologists create databases so professional around the world can share and analyze findings.

Materials List

Provided online:

- Video: Spanish Missions
- Handout: Spanish Missions Sources
- Handout: Examples of Databases
- Handout: Steps to Create and Analyze Artifacts
- Handout: Cards for Students
- Handout: Answer Keys

Not provided:

- Tape
- Scissors
- Assortment of recycled materials (cardboard pieces, egg cartons, etc)
- Assortment of art supplies (pipe cleaners, pom pom balls, construction paper)
- Smartphone or Tablet (optional)

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