



LHS GEMS Investigating Artifacts

Target Audience: Grades K-5

Description: LHS GEMS “Investigating Artifacts” is a curriculum that introduces youth to early Native Americans, their culture, and customs.

Format: Each of the six sessions focuses on a different activity that allows youth to enhance their knowledge of history and the lives of Native Americans, and can be done in a 45-60 minute time period.

Sessions 1: Natural Collecting and Sorting

In this session, youth will walk throughout the neighborhood around their school, collecting natural objects. After the youth have collected a number of objects, they will sort the objects in different ways, drawing conclusions about their neighborhood.

Session 2: Making Masks and Inferences

Youth will begin by discussing why Native Americans may have created masks or painted their faces to look like masks. Youth will then have the opportunity to use the objects they collected on their walk to create their own masks, and then use their masks to draw conclusions about what the masks may be used to simulate what anthropologists do when studying ancient Native American cultures.

Session 3: Creating Myths

In this session, youth will discuss what myths are and aren't, and listen to several Native American myths. In pairs, youth will then be asked to create their own myths after choosing one of five different pictures to help them brainstorm. The partners will then create their own myth by drawing a picture that will help them share their myth with others.

Session 4: Sharing Myths

In this session, youth will share the myths they created in Session 3 using their masks for dramatic effect and the pictures they created. They will then hear the story, “How the Stars Came to Be,” and discuss the ways in which anthropologists form ideas about the past from Native American's myths, and what future anthropologists would conclude about the myths the youth had created.

Session 5: Uncovering the Past or What's Hidden in the Midden

In this session, youth will do the work of archaeologists investigating artifacts from the past. Students will “excavate” the artifacts, investigate

their meaning, and then give them to a museum to be preserved. Simulated digging sites (middens) are provided with real artifacts.

Session 6: Putting Together Clues from the Past.

Youth look at the various “artifacts” they collected in the previous session and brainstorm ways that the objects may have been used by the people who lived at the site hundreds or thousands of years ago.

The LHS GEMS “Investigating Artifacts” curriculum also includes adapted lessons that focus on Australia and Aborigines, the indigenous people of that continent.

The LHS GEMS “Investigating Artifacts” curriculum and activity kit can be borrowed for one month.