

# Lizard Mound County Park

## Lesson Plan

### Grade 4

#### **THINKING LIKE AN ARCHEOLOGIST**

*(Archeologists used observational skills to study things left behind by Mound Builders at the Lizard Mound County Park)*

*Lesson plan pages 1-5*

**Strand:** science (archeology), social studies.





## Thinking Like an Archeologist

*(Archeologists used observational skills to study things left behind by the Mound Builders)*

**Strand:** science (archeology), social studies

**Grade Level:** grade 4

**Location:** classroom

### Objectives:

- learn how archeologists observe and use objects to study the past
- observe attributes of an “artifact”
- draw conclusions based on observations
- learn terms listed in **Vocabulary**

### Materials:

- teacher material: an unfamiliar object to model the process of making observations
- student materials: plastic or paper bags containing an unfamiliar object brought from home along with a sealed envelope containing an explanation of what the object represents

### Vocabulary:

- *archeology*- a science which tries to understand what people of the past were like and how they lived
- *artifacts*- things that were made, used and left behind by humans
- *site*- a special area where archeologists dig to find artifacts
- *archeologists*- scientists who study things that people have made, used, and left behind
- *shards*- broken pieces of pottery

### Resources:

- **Observations of My Artifact** printable activity sheet
- prepared letter for parents
- <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/a8/f1/f0/a8f1f0fdeaf5eaafc4d54825e89a1485.jpg>  
picture of pottery shards

## Procedure: (two parts)

**Note to teacher:** Prior to the day of the activity, instruct students to bring to school a small unfamiliar object from their home. This object should be an item whose function or identification is not immediately apparent, such as a strange kitchen implement or some other tool, or part of a toy, game, or a container. Junk drawers, desk drawers, or toy chests in their homes might have items that would work for this activity. However, the object shouldn't be impossibly obscure. It is okay if the item has been broken off of a larger object, as long as there are no sharp edges.

The student should place this item in a bag along with a separate sheet of paper containing an explanation of what the object actually represents. This explanation should be put in a sealed envelope. Be sure to emphasize to the students to keep their artifacts a secret. A letter has been prepared with this explanation for the parents of the "what and how" to bring to school.

You should have on hand several "artifacts" in case some students forget to bring one. Collect the artifacts from the students. This activity could be done individually, working with a partner, or in a group.

An activity sheet, **Observations of My Artifact** is included with this plan on a separate page.

### Part 1 Archeologists Observe Attributes of an Artifact

1. Show students your artifact. Tell them that today we will pretend that we are *archeologists* (scientists who study things that people have made, used, and left behind). Pretend this (the teacher's "artifact") is an *artifact* (things that were made, used and left behind by humans). Say that we will make believe that we found it when we were digging at a *site* (a special area where archeologists dig to find artifacts). But first, we will look at what archeologists would do if they found a *shard* (broken piece of pottery) at their site.
2. Explain to the children that sometimes *archeologists* find something at a *site* and they are not sure what it is or how it was used. Project picture of pottery *shards* in **Resources**.
  - An archeologist might find some pieces of shards like this, and they weren't sure who used it or how it was used.
  - They would then study them and carefully observe the shards.
  - While pointing out various shards on the picture, tell the children that an archeologist might be asking some questions about the shards like:
    - How thick is it?
    - How big is it?
    - What is it made from?
    - What are those designs on the outside of this one?
    - Why is there soot on that one?
    - Why are there scrape marks inside of one?
3. Explain to the students that by making such observations and trying to answer questions, archeologists have often been able to figure out the way many of the pots were used. Here are some conclusions they might make from their observations of the shards you see in this picture (pointing to the various shards). *Note: You might ask the children to come to some of these conclusions on their own.*

- A pot that had been used for cooking usually showed soot on the outside where it had been set in the fire.
  - Scrape marks are often inside where food had been stirred.
  - The designs on the shards might show which group of Native Americans had made it.
4. Say to the children that sometimes there are not enough clues for archeologists to come to a solid conclusion. Sometimes artifacts remain a *mystery*.

## Part 2 Thinking Like an Archeologist Activity

1. *Model the activity:* Show teacher's "artifact" and remind students to pretend that they are archeologists who found this artifact at a site. Tell students that as archeologists they will make observations about this artifact. Ask, what do you notice about this artifact?
2. Then project the **Observations of My Artifact** activity sheet (in **Resources**) for all to see. Tell students that these are some questions an archeologist might ask when looking at an artifact. Go through the questions with the students to help them answer them and come to a conclusion(s) about your object.
3. Before handing out the artifacts brought from home, tell students that they are going to think about some objects that they brought from home like archeologists. Tell them to pretend that they found this artifact while digging at their site.
4. Distribute the **Observations of My Artifact** activity sheet to students. Tell students that they can use this sheet to help them make observations and think like an archeologist. Archeologists *record their observations*. You too, will record your observations by filling out this worksheet.
5. After completing their worksheets ask students to share with the class their observations and conclusions.
6. The sealed envelopes can at this time be opened and shared with the individuals, groups or the whole class. Did they draw the right conclusions? If so, why? If not, why not? Tell them that sometimes archeologists have trouble coming to conclusions too. Remind them that sometimes the artifact remains a *mystery*.

## Sources:

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/intrigue/1013>

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/a8/f1/f0/a8f1f0fdeaf5eaafc4d54825e89a1485.jpg>

The text of this page is copyright ©2001. All Rights Reserved. Images and other media may be licensed separately; see captions for more information and read the fine print.

Provided by Research Laboratories of Archaeology.

## My Observations of My Artifact

1. What does it look like?
2. What color is it?
3. What's it made of?
4. Does it look complete? Or broken?
5. Does it look worn?
6. Has it been fixed or mended?
7. Is it made by hand or by machine?
8. Is it decorated? If so how was it decorated?
9. Is there writing on the object? If so what?

### ***My conclusion:***

How might this artifact been used?

Dear Parents,

In science we are going to look at archaeologists who learn about the past by observing unknown artifacts they have found. Our class will also experience this process by making observations of unfamiliar objects brought into the classroom. Please help us gather some unfamiliar objects for our study. Here's how:

1. Help your child find a small, unfamiliar object whose function or identity is not immediately apparent. It could be an unusual kitchen implement, or some tool, or part of a game, or container. Your junk drawer, desk drawer, tool box, or toy chest would be a good place to look. An item broken off of some larger object would be fine, as long as there are no sharp edges. Although the object should be unfamiliar to most, it shouldn't be too obscure. After making observations, they will attempt to come to a conclusion about how the object might \ used.
2. Have an explanation written of what your item is, or how it was used and put the explanation in a sealed envelope with your child's name on it. It is important to tell your child *not* to share the object's identity with their classmates until after the activity.
3. Send the object and the sealed envelope to school in a paper or plastic bag.
4. Please have the bags brought to school by\_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for helping us with this learning project,