

Digging for Evidence Program

Location Jackson Homestead & Museum, 527 Washington Street, Newton M A 02458

Audience Students in grades 2-8

Run time 90 minutes

Essential Question What can we learn about people who lived in the past from the objects they left behind?

Objectives:

After completing this program, participants will be better able to ...

1. Use evidence to articulate multiple perspectives within the discussed historical period.
2. Practice directed observation & critical thinking skills
3. Utilize observational and critical thinking skills to learn about people from the past from objects they left behind
4. Participate in a conversation regarding Native Americans in Massachusetts using both prior knowledge and newly acquired knowledge
5. Summarize from their first-hand experience how archaeologists do detective work of history

Overview

Students practice directed observation and critical thinking skills to discover what we can learn about people who lived in the past from the artifacts they left behind. This program specifically focuses on Native Americans in Massachusetts, and invites students to share prior knowledge while exploring new information learned from objects. Students handle and observe real artifacts, then participate in a mock archaeological dig to find out first-hand how archaeologists do the detective work of history. After the dig, students make their own historical-style clay pot to take home.



About your visit

Parking is available on Washington Street and Jackson Road. Groups arriving in buses may be dropped off at the museum's driveway, but please do not park there. The Digging for Evidence program is held in the Orientation Room and the backyard of the Jackson Homestead. Please have your students separated into 4-6 groups, with at least 4 students in each group, this will help facilitate the mock dig section of the program. If you wish to conclude your program with a snack, please notify the staff in advance and plan for an additional 15 minutes. You must bring all snack supplies. In order to preserve the artifacts and documents on display, flash photography is not allowed in the museum.

About the museum

The Jackson Homestead and Museum features exhibits and programs on Newton, one of the country's earliest railroad suburbs, and on the 1809 Homestead itself, a stop on the Underground Railroad and home to the family of William Jackson throughout the nineteenth century. The Museum offers education programs for all ages on the following subject areas: Family Life in the 1800s, the Underground Railroad, Native American History and Culture, Archaeology, and Local History. The programs engage students in active learning through observing, discussing, and participating in hands-on activities.

Suggested vocabulary

Archaeologist - a person who the studies the ancient and recent human past through material remains

Artifact- anything made or used by humans



Projectile Point- any stone, bone, or wooden tip attached to a weapon such as an arrow, dart, lance, or spear

Pottery Sherd- commonly a fragment of pottery, although the term is occasionally used to refer to fragments of stone and glass vessels as well

Brush- archeologists use brushes to gently clean grit and dirt from artifacts when they are working on an excavation

Sifter- used on the soil that comes from excavation in order to search for and better spot artifacts. Soil is poured into the screen from either a bucket or a shovel, then shaken back and forth to allow the lighter soil to fall through the screen mesh, while heavier artifacts will stay inside the screen box.



Scraper- Used to move more soil in a shorter time from the excavation. Soil is shoveled either into buckets and then carried to the sifter.

Suggested pre-visit activities

1. Have students keep a journal of everything they do for one day. What clothes did they wear? How did they get around? What activities did they do? What did they eat? Where did they sleep? Use the journal as a springboard for a discussion about basic needs by finding the commonalities in all of the journals. All of us wear clothes, sleep in a shelter, eat food and drink water. Native Americans 1000's of years ago also had the same needs! How might they have met their basic needs without grocery stores, cars, malls or suburbs? Brainstorm, research, read and explore to get to know basics of Native American daily life.

2. Have students practice their observation skills! Divide into groups, or work as a class, and make a detailed list about things you can observe from an object. For example, use a coke can and observe its shape, size, color, make guesses about the material it is made of, what it sounds like, ect. Based upon what you can observe, make guesses about what the object is and what it could have been used for! When you visit the museum, you will learn that archaeologists often have to use their observation skills to learn about artifacts and the people that made them!

Suggested post-visit activities

1. Learn more about Native peoples through an exploration of edible plants available near your own home or school. Have students create their own field guides with images, drawings and descriptions of plants they find around their own home and school. Then, students research the plants with print or online resources. Which plants are native to the area? Which are edible? Discuss and consider how Native Americans may have used these plants. Which tools that you saw on your museum trip could have helped them gather and process food?

2. Once archaeologists have completed their field notes and initial examination of the artifacts they find, they must then elaborate on those findings to further scholarship in their field. Students will work in their groups to more thoroughly summarize and document the artifact images and the hypotheses they developed in the previous activity. Give students the following prompts:

- Using your artifact worksheet from your museum visit, write a summary of your findings and describe how you think they relate to the Native American people who used the artifacts you examined.
- Using the evidence you gathered from examining the artifacts, write a description of what you think a day in the life of the Native Americans who used them would be like.
- Draw a picture of each of the artifacts and label them with a name your group decides on. Hint: many archeologists use simple, descriptive words when naming an object whose exact purpose they are unsure of (for example "animal scapula," rather than "hoe blade").

Native Americans in Newton

The present-day Newton area was home to many Native American populations including the Massachusett, Pequot, Mohegan, Narraganset, and Wampanoag, all of whom spoke variations of the Algonquian language family, for thousands of years. It is estimated that Native groups occupied this area at least intermittently over the past 13,000 years. Many populations lived semi-nomadic lifestyles, with tribes moving their villages or living sites from one location to another as the agricultural seasons changed, or the natural resources of a particular area began to dwindle. Their diets consisted of gathered resources such as roots, nuts, and berries, hunted game, fish and shellfish, as well as planted crops such as squash, corn, and beans.



By the mid-1600's, Native American populations in the Greater Boston and Newton areas had been decimated by European diseases and the overall effects of colonization. In an effort to further control what native populations remained, the European colonists established what came to be known as "Praying Towns" or "Villages," where colonizing ministers attempted to convert groups of Native Americans to Christianity, primarily through a coerced adoption by the Native Americans of the English language. John Eliot, a minister notable for preaching to the native populations in their Algonquian language, conducted his first successful sermons in what is now present-day Newton. Using the Algonquian language as a base for cross-cultural communication, Eliot went on to establish a Praying Town in Natick, and eventually translated, transcribed and printed biblical scripture in Algonquian.

Native America culture and life persisted despite these physical and cultural attacks. Today, Native Americans continue to practice and share their traditions while living modern lives. At least five tribes, bands and communities still exist in Massachusetts today, including to the Wampanoag, a federally recognized tribe.

Archaeology

Archaeology is the careful study of people who lived in the past through the examination of the things they left behind. By closely examining and gathering information from the artifacts and materials that were made and used by people in the past, archaeologists and anthropologists can piece together a clearer picture of who those people were and how they lived. Archaeology is especially important for learning about past cultures that left little or no written record, such as many Native American cultures.

Archaeological excavations have multiple components, and each provides critical pieces of information about the materials being excavated. Considerations such as where in a site an artifact was found, how deeply it was buried, and what other artifacts it was buried near must all be carefully documented during the excavation process, and requires the collaboration of an entire excavation team in order to do so. Once the artifacts have been uncovered, the real detective work begins. The visual examination of excavated artifacts reveals information about what they might have been, how they might have been used, and who might have used them. Gathering visual and scientific evidence from an artifact can aid archaeologists and anthropologists in making an hypothesis about the culture that would have used it, and opens up communication with people from the past.

MA History & Social Studies Curriculum Framework

2nd grade

History and Social Science

Concepts and Skills

2. Use correctly words and phrases related to time, changing historical periods, and causation.

English Language Arts

SL.2.1.a-c. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners...in small and larger groups.

SL.2.2. Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

SL.2.6. Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

3rd grade

History and Social Science

Concepts and Skills

1. Explain the meaning of time periods or dates in historical narratives and use them correctly in speaking and writing.

Standards

3.12. Explain how objects or artifacts of everyday life in the past tell us how ordinary people lived and how everyday life has changed. Draw on the services of the local historical society and local museums as needed.

English Language Arts

SL.3.1.a-d. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.3.2. Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

SL.3.3. Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

SL.3.6. Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

4th grade

English Language Arts

SL.4.1.a-d. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners...building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.4.2. Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

SL.4.6. Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English and situations where informal discourse is appropriate; use formal English when appropriate.

5th grade

History and Social Science

Concepts and Skills

1. Identify different ways of dating historical narratives.

English Language Arts

SL.5.1.a-d. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.5.2. Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

SL.5.6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, using formal English when appropriate to task and situation.

7th grade

History and Social Science

Concepts and Skills

2. Use correctly the words or abbreviations for identifying time periods or dates in historical narratives... Identify in BC/BCE dates the higher number as indicating the older year

3. Construct and interpret timelines of events and civilizations studied.

4. Distinguish between primary and secondary sources and describe how each kind of source is used in interpreting history

6. Describe ways of interpreting archaeological evidence from societies leaving no written records.

8th grade

Concepts and Skills

1. Apply the skills of prekindergarten through grade seven.

3. Interpret and construct timelines that show how events and eras in various parts of the world are related to one another.

8. Interpret the past within its own historical context rather than in terms of present-day

10. Distinguish historical fact from opinion.

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