



**North Carolina Office of State Archaeology**  
A division of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
[archaeology.ncdcr.gov](http://archaeology.ncdcr.gov)

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# NC ARCHAEOLOGY @ HOME

**Educational Activities for Kids to do at Home**

Developed by the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology

2020

## Introduction

### What is Archaeology?

Archaeology is the study of the past through what we leave behind.

### Who is an Archaeologist?

Archaeologists are *Anthropologists*- Anthropologists study people, and archaeologists study people from the past. An archaeologist can study the Egyptian pyramids, old houses, cave paintings, arrow heads, pottery—anything that was made and left behind by people!

Archaeologists are not geologists—people who study rocks and minerals. Although, archaeologists sometimes use geologic concepts to help them determine how old things in the ground are!

Archaeologists are also not paleontologists—people who study ancient reptiles like dinosaurs.

Archaeologists DO NOT study  
or dig up dinosaurs



Image courtesy of USFS [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5360668.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5360668.pdf)

# Activity 1: Stratigraphy

## Concepts

### Stratigraphy

Stratigraphy is a branch of geology concerned with the study of rock and soil layers. Archaeologists carefully remove artifacts from soil and document their position and layer of soil from which they were removed from. Then they use stratigraphy to try and estimate how old the artifacts are.

### Law of Superposition

The Law of Superposition is another geological concept, related to stratigraphy. The law states that in undisturbed soil, the youngest layer is on top and the oldest on bottom. Archaeologists use this concept when studying artifacts they found. In the field, archaeologists take notes on which layer of soil they removed an artifact from and if one artifact was above or below another artifact.

### Absolute Dating

Absolute dating produces a specific date or date range for an event in the past. Normally, archaeologists can only use absolute dating for certain objects like glass and ceramics. For example, we know that U.S. currency is marked with the year that it was made. If you find a penny with the year 2002 on it, you know its absolute date is 2002.

### Relative Dating

Relative dating helps archaeologists determine the relative order in which an event took place. Often, it is used with absolute dating. For example, if you find a penny from 2002 in a layer of soil, you know that penny could not have been dropped in that layer of soil before 2002. If you dig deeper and find another layer of soil, you can assume any objects in that layer were made before 2002.

## Questions

1. How old do you think the oldest artifact found in North Carolina is?
2. If you dig a hole straight down, where should the oldest artifacts be?
3. Where should you find the youngest artifacts?

## Activity

- Cut out the artifacts on page 4
- Print out the stratigraphy board on page 5
- Discuss the man-made and natural changes to the soil on the stratigraphy board (such as the well/pit and in the animal burrow). Although these features appear deeper than the layers around them, they are cutting into these layers from above and are still younger than the layer that into which they were cut.
- Give each student an artifact and allow them to discuss how old they think the artifacts are.
- Have the students place the artifacts on the board relative to others.
- Discuss how archaeologists use this technique to relatively date a site.

Clovis Point  
14,000 years old



U.S. Penny  
18 years old



Savannah River  
4,000 years old



Glass beads  
300 years old



Kirk Corner-Notched  
9,000 years old



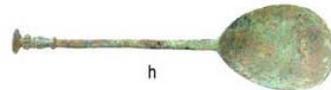
Clay Pipe  
350 years old



Pendant  
7,500 years old



Metal Spoon  
330 years old



Dan River Pot  
800 years old



PeeDee Pot  
750 years old



Deer Skull  
1+ years old



Ceramic Plate  
190 years old



Images courtesy of UNC RLA



Image courtesy of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

## Activity 2: Chalk Art

### What is a Petroglyph?

Petroglyphs are rock carvings (rock paintings are called pictographs) made by pecking directly on the rock surface using a stone chisel and a hammerstone. Archaeologists use petroglyphs to help them interpret the past, but it's not always easy!

### North Carolina Petroglyph *Judaculla Rock*



Image courtesy of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

### Activity

- Have the students think of a fun event that they were a part of recently. It could have happened at school, at home, on vacation, etc.
- Have them draw that event using only pictures. It can be outside using chalk or inside using markers, crayons, pencils, etc.
- When they are finished, have the students interpret each other's drawings.
- Have the artist describe what their drawing was and see how close the interpretations were!

## Activity 3: Hidden in Photographs

### Lesson

Archaeologists do not only study objects. They also study historic documents and oral histories to help them interpret an archaeological site. One type of document they can use is photographs. Photographs are a great tool because they are a snapshot into people's lifestyles, activities, social or familial relationships, and special or historical events.

### Activity

- Print out a variety of photographs for students to look at. You can use the photographs found on pages 8-12 or you can find your own online, in newspapers, even in family photo albums! Just make sure you can answer the following questions.
- Have the students study the photographs and answer the questions.
- When they are finished answering the questions, let them know how they did using the key on page 13!

### Questions

**Where:** Where was the photograph taken?

**Who:** Who are the people in the photograph?

**What:** What are the people doing?

**When:** What clues might tell us when the photograph was taken?

**Why:** Why was the photograph taken?



1. Image from the Rockingham County Legacy: A Digital Heritage Project, Rockingham County Public Library, Courtesy of the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center.



2. Image from the N.C. Department of Conservation and Development, Division of Travel and Tourism, Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina.



3. Image from the N.C. Department of Conservation and Development, Division of Travel and Tourism, Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina



4. Image from the Asheville Veterans Administration Medical Center Collection. Courtesy of the Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina



5. Image from the Audio Visuals Materials Unit, State Archives of North Carolina. Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina.



6. Image from the Audio Visuals Materials Unit, State Archives of North Carolina. Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina.



7. Image from the Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum. Courtesy of the North Carolina State Historic Sites.



8. Image from the News & Observer Negative Collection. Courtesy of the News & Observer

## Picture Key

1.	Goins School students line up in front of the bookmobile during the 1949-1950 school year. Goins School was a native American school located in Goinstown, Rockingham County, North Carolina
2.	Women making pottery on the Qualla Boundary, Swain County, North Carolina in 1940.
3.	Woman working with a spinning loom in 1939 at the Style Textile Show in Raleigh, North Carolina
4.	Nurses pose in front of the Allen School, a private boarding school for African American students in Asheville, North Carolina. The nurses were part of a volunteer program at the Oteen Veterans Affairs Hospital in 1966-1967.
5.	Tiny Broadwick, a parachutist who invented the rip cord, just before going up for her last jump in 1922 in Los Angeles, California. She is shown with Clyde Pangborn an aerial stunt performer, and Mayor, George Edward Cryer. Tiny was born in Oxford, North Carolina
6.	Students and their teacher posing in front of Professor Jacob's School, Lake Waccamaw, North Carolina in the early 1900's
7.	Palmer Memorial Institute's French Club in 1955, Sedalia, North Carolina
8.	The 24 <sup>th</sup> Annual Haliwa-Saponi Pow Wow near Hollister, North Carolina, April 16, 1989.

**Find more historical photographs at:**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/>

<https://lib.digitalnc.org/>

<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/>

## Activity 4: Artifact Puzzles

### Lesson

Archaeologists rarely find whole artifacts, especially when objects are fragile such as ceramics and glass. Putting an artifact back together is called reconstruction. Archaeologists can learn a lot from reconstructing broken artifacts like construction method, function, size, shape, and decoration. These attributes can be used to answer questions about the object's purpose, age, or significance. Therefore, archaeologists try to reconstruct broken objects so that they can better answer these questions!

### Activity

- Print out images of different artifacts. You can print out the ones provided on pages 15-17 or find your own online! OSA uses magnetic paper and has the students reconstruct the objects on metal pans, but you can use any type of paper.
- Cut the images to create a puzzle. The more pieces and the straighter the edges, the harder the puzzle will be.
- Have the students observe the characteristics of each piece paying attention to attributes such as decoration, color, shape, etc.
- Reconstruct the "artifacts" by fitting two pieces together using the characteristics they described above.
- When the object is reconstructed, have the students discuss what the object is, what it was used for, and what they believe is the age of the object!



Image courtesy of UNC RLA



Image courtesy of UNC RLA



Image courtesy of UNC RLA