Let’s Learn About:
Archeology,
Artifacts,
Prehistory,
Culture,
&
Context
Russell Cave National Monument is an archeological site that protects a prehistoric cave shelter. In the 1950’s, local archeologists began excavating the shelter and found evidence of human occupation. Eventually, archeologists from the Smithsonian Institution joined the dig and additional funding for the project was provided by the National Geographic Society. The findings from the excavations pieced together the day to day lives of ancient people, supporting that the cave shelter was used for over 10,000 years. After thousands of artifacts were discovered beneath the surface by archeologists, Russell Cave was established as part of the National Park Service in 1961. Today, over 10 different tribes and their members can trace their ancestry to those who lived in the shelter and surrounding area.

Throughout this book you will learn to think like an archeologist and find ways you can help protect special places like Russell Cave. Once you have learned the skills needed, you will be recognized as an official Junior Archeologist.

There are many career paths that specialize in different areas of archeology. Here are just a few. Can you draw a line to match the archeologist to what they study?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical archeologist</th>
<th>I scuba dive to excavate sites and study shipwrecks in lakes and oceans.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zooarcheologist</td>
<td>I learn how people in the past used the stars and planets to determine seasons and holidays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwater archeologist</td>
<td>I combine studies of earth sciences and traces of human interactions in the environment over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archeoastronomist</td>
<td>I use historic documents in my research and study cultures with written records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoarcheologist</td>
<td>I study how people in the past interacted with animals, such as how they hunted and fished.</td>
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This project was made possible by a grant from the National Park Foundation through generous support of partners, including Union Pacific Railroad, and donors across the country.
How do archeologists find out information about the past? By coming up with research questions, digging for artifacts, studying artifacts and their relations to one another, and sharing that information with others!

**DIRECTIONS:** Archeological excavations must be done in a specific order and includes much more than just digging. An archeologist’s “To Do” list below needs to be ordered correctly 1-9.

**TO DO**

- Write a site report based on information from artifacts
- Catalog, wash, photograph, and describe artifacts found during excavations
- Survey the selected site and make an accurate map
- Use surveys and maps to choose places within the site for excavation
- Start by developing a research question
- Design a research plan to answer the research question; select site, equipment, team members, and set budget
- Share information in the report through books, magazines, and museum exhibits
- Begin excavating scientifically and carefully, recording the location of each artifact
- Move artifacts, field notes, and maps to the lab when the excavation is complete
Archeologists often have to think about ethics, or the difference between doing what is right and what is wrong. Sometimes doing the right thing is hard, but archeologists have a responsibility to do what is right for everyone. Doing the right thing is a sign of respect to other archeologists as well as cultures of the past and present.

**DIRECTIONS:** Consider the decisions made by the archeologists below. Decide if you think they did the right or the wrong thing. Place a check mark in the correct box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RIGHT</th>
<th>WRONG</th>
<th>DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An archeologist shares research with others through books, articles, and museums.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An archeologist sees a volunteer place an artifact into their pocket. The archeologist doesn’t say anything and lets the volunteer take the artifact home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An archeologist notices a site has been disturbed. They contact the authorities, document the damage, and do their best to ensure that the site is protected throughout the rest of the dig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An archeologist sells several artifacts found during an excavation to increase funding for further research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stories in the Soil

An archeological site has many layers, known as stratigraphy, that can be analyzed and used to tell the story of the artifacts. Depending on where artifacts are found in these various layers, archeologists are able to determine how old an artifact is in comparison to what is around it.

**DIRECTIONS:** Answer the following questions about artifacts A-F from this archeological site.

Which artifact is the oldest? _____

Which artifact is the most recent? ______

Which artifact is in silt? ______

Which artifact is older, C or F? ______

If each layer takes about 150 years to build up, estimate how old artifact F might be. __________

Why do you think it is important to know the age of an artifact?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Archeologists study people who lived in the past. This information is being threatened as sites are destroyed by weather, animals, and humans. Archeologists need to be aware of such threats and make sure that these sites are protected.

**DIRECTIONS:** Unscramble the words to identify the threats to your archeological site. Think about how you could protect archeological sites from these threats.

**Words to Unscramble:**
- IUHRNRCAE
- CIOOTRUNSCTN
- GLTIOON
- EFRI
- TERE RTOOS
- DRONETS
DIRECTIONS: Choose an object from your classroom to help a museum curator create an exhibit. Pretend you have never seen this item before, and consider it an artifact. Create a descriptive label with a sketch of the object. Your label should:

1) Include descriptive information about the object and its time period
2) Share why this object may be important
3) Share with museum visitors why this object is interesting

Object name: ____________________________________________

Estimated era of use: ____________________________________

Location found: ____________________________
_______________________________
_______________________________

Item was probably used for: ____________________________
_______________________________
_______________________________

Material(s) from which the object is made: ______________
_______________________________
_______________________________

Other important information:
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Home Sweet Home

Some archeologists study homes from the past. People have lived in many different types of homes. What could an archeologist learn about you from studying where you live?

**DIRECTIONS:** Match the home descriptions on the left to the corresponding shelters on the right.

I am built from wood. I have a brick fireplace for warmth and cooking.

I am carved into a mountain from millions of years of water eroding the rock. Fire pits are used for warmth and cooking.

I am built from soil and clay that is shaped into walls. Residents can work and play on my roof.

I am built from animal skins. I move around a lot, so I am easy to pull down and take to new locations.

What could an archeologist learn about you from studying your home?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
An artifact needs context, where and with what the artifact was found, within the excavation site for an archeologist to learn how it was made and used. When an artifact is removed from its context, or place of discovery, archeologists lose key information about that artifact that we cannot get back.

**DIRECTIONS:** Observe the artifacts below. Answer the following questions.

What do you think happened at this site? (Think about how the artifacts might have been used).

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

What can you infer about the people who used these items? (Think about who might have used them).

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

How would the story change if the doll wasn’t found at the site? The horseshoe?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
**Fill in the Pieces**

**DIRECTIONS:** Test your knowledge of what you’ve learned as a junior archeologist by filling in the crossword puzzle below. Use the word bank at the bottom of the page to help you.

**Across:**
1. Small pieces of broken pottery
2. Studying different layers in a site
3. Scientific digging
4. Objects archeologists find
6. Those who study people and artifacts from the past
7. A list of events in the order they happened
8. The relationship artifacts have to each other and the place in which they are found
9. A destructive, illegal behavior

**Down:**
1. Small pieces of broken pottery
2. Studying different layers in a site
3. Scientific digging
5. A keeper or custodian of a museum or other collection
7. A list of events in the order they happened

**Word Bank**
Artifacts  Archeologists  Chronology  Context  Curator
Excavation  Looting  Sherds  Stratigraphy
**How You Can Help**

**DIRECTIONS:** Read how you can help protect archeological sites. Then find all the underlined words in the puzzle.

Archeological sites are being destroyed at an alarming rate. Once these sites are gone, they are lost forever. If people like you stand up for archeology, that might change. You can help by setting a good example for others and sharing what you have learned as a Junior Archeologist.

Archeology tells important stories, and each artifact is part of that story. If you find artifacts in a national park, leave them where you found them and tell a ranger. Remember, removing artifacts from their context erases crucial information about that artifact.

If you see other people removing artifacts, tell a ranger. Looting or using a metal detector is illegal in national parks. People who take artifacts from public lands are stealing from our shared past.

Act as an archeological ambassador. Speak up! Share what you know about the stories of the past told through archeology. If more people understand why archeology is important, we can protect and preserve our past for our future.
AS A JUNIOR ARCHEOLOGIST,

I, ____________________________, PLEDGE TO:

- EXPLORE ARCHEOLOGY IN MY COMMUNITY AND LEAVE DIGGING TO THE PROFESSIONALS
- LEARN MORE ABOUT ARCHEOLOGY
- PROTECT OUR NATIONAL PARKS AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES
- SHARE WHAT I KNOW ABOUT ARCHEOLOGY WITH OTHERS

RANGER SIGNATURE: ___________________________

OFFICIAL PARK STAMP