



# Digging up the Past: An Archaeology Adventure!

## Thematic Unit

**Grade Level:** Grades 3-6

**Program Length:** 50-60 minutes

**Tennessee Curriculum Standards met:**

<i>Social Studies Practices and Content:</i>			
SSP.01-05 (3 <sup>rd</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> )	3.31		
SSP.01, .02, .05 (6 <sup>th</sup> grade)	4.21		
<i>English Language Arts:</i>		<i>Reading Standards:</i>	
2.FL.SC.6	2.RL.KID.1	2.SL.PKI.4	
3.FL.SC.6	3.RL.KID.1	3.SL.PKI.4	
4.FL.SC.6	4.RL.KID.1	4.SL.PKI.4	
5.FL.SC.6	5.RL.KID.1	5.SLPKI.4	

**What do we want them to know?** Understanding past people, communities, and landscapes relies on the science of archaeology. **Archaeology** is the study of the materials left behind by people of the past and present. These materials are discovered through a systematic and detailed examination of the materials in their discovered location. Bringing together archaeological materials, detailed examinations of their discovered locations, and additional research archaeologists, historians, and others can recreate the stories and people of the past. An **archaeologist** is a scientist who studies people who lived in the past by studying the objects they leave behind.

**Why do we want them to know it?** Archaeology is critical to understanding the human experience across time. It helps to identify changes over time in human existence and environment as well as identifying continuities of material culture. Archaeology is only one piece of the total puzzle of understanding history but it is a necessary one. We want students to understand that the puzzle of the

past requires many skills and resources. You can tell a lot about someone by the objects they own, and that's the basis of Archaeology at The Hermitage. Based on actual archaeological excavations at The Hermitage, students will use deductive reasoning to examine the lives of the people who lived at The Hermitage.

### **How does this meet the mission of or connect to all the resources of the Andrew Jackson Foundation?**

This program allows the AJF to open a window into the many decades of work we have spent trying to fully understand the people and culture of The Hermitage plantation. Our exhibits and website contain many images and examples of artifacts discovered here on the property. This program allows to provide an introduction to the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery ([daacs.org](http://daacs.org)).

### **Pre- and Post-Visit Suggested Activities:**

1. Students may read fictional and non-fictional stories about archaeologists, their work, and the uses of archaeological information. See the bibliography for a few recommendations.
2. While touring The Hermitage property, have the students consider what artifacts might be still unfound. What artifacts could still be undiscovered around the Mansion, the Garden, Alfred's Cabin, or farmland? What would it mean to find artifacts in one location that don't make sense, such as a teacup in a field?
3. In the classroom or at home, have students make a list of things an archaeologist might use to understand their life in 100 years.
4. As a class, discuss what artifacts might be discovered on your school grounds. What would they learn about students from 50 years ago?
5. Have students bring three objects from their bedroom to class. Ask students to figure out details of their lives based on what they bring.
6. Using art materials of their preference, have students create a vision of the spaces occupied by the people discussed during the class.

### **Summary**

This class is designed to meet educational standards for Grades 3 through 6 but can be adapted for students at all levels. It focuses on the importance of archaeology to illuminating the lives of people of the past. After a brief discussion on the definition and science of archaeology, students will be grouped and directed to excavate an assigned sand table. Like professional historians, students will grid the spaces, tag artifacts, and record their findings. To finalize, each group will then use the archaeological date to collaboratively structure a story of an enslaved person from The Hermitage. The class requires the full 60 minutes, but can be adapted for a shorter time if necessary.

### **Objectives**

1. Examine the purpose and process of archaeology.
2. Explore the idea of deductive reasoning in a hands-on environment.
3. Understand the lives of nineteenth-century Americans – both white and enslaved.

### **Background**

From Jackson's letters, maps, and other documents Hermitage archaeologists know that there were at least one hundred buildings and structures on the Hermitage property during Jackson's life. While some of these buildings have been found, most have not. Fortunately, archaeological evidence and Jackson's

documents provide clues as to where they were. Examples of these buildings include: the overseer’s house, barns, stables, carriage houses, the blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, and spinning/weaving shop. Since the first archaeological dig took place at The Hermitage in the 1970s, approximately 850,000 artifacts have been uncovered and numerous previously unknown or missing buildings have been located.

### Vocabulary

Archaeology	Excavation
Archaeologist	Primary Source
Artifact	Reasoning
Deduction	Slave Quarter

### Presentation Outline

*Note to classroom instructor: this information will be covered within the education program.*

1. Begin discussion with an examination of the meaning of an artifact. Ask for examples of artifacts. Does an object have to be thousands of years old to be considered an “artifact?” An artifact is “something created by humans for a practical purpose.” That could be three weeks ago, or three hundred years ago.
2. How can you learn about a person by the objects they own? Introduce concept of **deductive reasoning**: have three or four objects on hand and assist students through deductive reasoning process.
3. Begin presentation on archaeology at The Hermitage. Examine sites at The Hermitage – what artifacts might you expect to find at The Triplex, the Cotton Gin, the Smokehouse, the Field Quarter, and the root cellar.
4. What are the tools necessary to uncover artifacts? Emphasize other tools, such as patience, thoroughness, and being careful.
5. How would artifacts found at the Mansion differ from those found in the Slave Quarters?
6. Split students into three groups and assign them to one of three stations. These stations represent three sites on The Hermitage’s property: the root cellar, Triplex, and Field Quarter.
7. Have students catalog the artifacts they find and compare their findings to provided primary source information.
8. Allow students time to begin a collaborative narrative about the person and place to whom their artifacts connect.
9. Explain that archaeology is a window to the past and gives us clues about how those who came before us lived.

### Selected Bibliography

#### *Primary Sources*

1. Photograph, The Hermitage, c.1885
2. Photograph, Betty with her Great-Grandchildren, c. 1867
3. Photograph, Triplex Excavation, c.1995
4. Photograph, Field Quarter Excavation, c.1995
5. Photograph, Hermitage Kitchen, c. 1995
6. Object, Animal Jaw Bone, c. 1830
7. Object, Pottery, c. 1830
8. Object, Domino, c. 1830

9. Object, Marble, c.1830

*Secondary Sources*

1. Marrin, Albert. *Old Hickory: Andrew Jackson and the American People*. Penguin, 2004.
2. Panchyk, Richard. *Archaeology for Kids: Uncovering the Mysteries of Our Past*. Chicago Review Press, 2001.
3. Remini, Robert. *The Life of Andrew Jackson*. Harper Perennial Classics, 2001.
4. White, John R. *Hands-On Archaeology: Real-Life Activities*. Prufrock Press, 2005.

*For Further Reading*

1. Baker, Amanda. *Can YOU Dig It?: Archaeology Lost and Found in the Sands of Time*. 2017.
2. Guillain, Charlotte. *The Street Beneath My Feet (Look Closer)*. Words & Pictures, 2017.
3. Martin, Claudia. Beatrice Blue and Mike Love, Illustrators. *Build Your Own Museum, No. 1*. New York: Lonely Planet Kids, 2020.
4. Pickering, Robert B. *I Can Be an Archaeologist*. Chicago: Children's Press, 1987.