

ARCHAEOLOGY AND EARLY YEARS

INTRODUCING ARCHAEOLOGY AT FOUNDATION STAGE AND KS1

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Introduction

Archaeology can provide a stimulating focus for a whole range of topics at Foundation Stage and KS1. Not only does it lend itself naturally to the teaching of history concepts such as *old and new* and *past and present*, but it can also be used to illustrate aspects of the world of work. The following activity ideas will show you how. They could be followed up by work on a sand tray excavation (<http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/EarlyYears/SandTray.htm>) which would allow further work on the vocabulary of history and can provide a focus for looking at such topics as *materials* and *textures*.

Activity 1: Telling the story

Aim	To help develop children's awareness of such concepts as <i>past and present</i> , <i>old and new</i>
Equipment	A suitable story or picture book. Some examples are suggested below.
Duration	10-15 minutes

Method

1. Preparation: Choose a suitable text to use with the children.

Many books for children present a (sometimes fanciful) view of the past. In *Sam Pig and the Dragon* by Alison Utley, for instance, the dragon tells his history to Sam and explains that he went to sleep when the Romans arrive 'because they were too noisy'!

What is needed here is something that looks at the processes of loss, decay and how things get covered up. This could still be achieved by the 'talking animal story'. *Wind in the Willows* has long been a popular children's classic. In one section Badger explains to Mole why there is a Roman town in part of his home. However, the teacher would probably have to do much to set the passage in context. A clearer view of the survival of objects from the past is given in *The Sandal* by Tony Bradman. This follows the tale of a sandal which was lost in Roman times to its place in a display case in a museum. A child is looking at the exhibit. On her way home she loses her sandal. Where will it end up?

2. Read through the text with the class and look at the pictures.

3. As you do so discuss the content with your class. Points to bring out could include:

- Have you ever lost any toys?
- Were you upset?
- What do you think happened to them?
- Do you think someone else might have found them?
- Have you ever found anything?
- What was it?
- Was it buried?
- Who do you think could have lost it?
- How do you think they would feel?
- Where do objects in museums come from?

4. Make the link with archaeology

The aim of the questioning should be to associate events in the lives of our class with events in the lives of people in the past. You can then go on to explain that there are people whose job it is to look for things that were buried or lost a long time ago. They are called *archaeologists*.

Activity 2: Reinforcing the point through role play

Aim	To develop children's understanding of such concepts as <i>past and present, old and new</i>
	To help children understand about sources of evidence
	To look at tools and clothes for the job
Equipment	Someone/thing to be the archaeologist. It could

be a person if a volunteer could be found, or it could be a glove puppet which you operate yourself.

Tools - gardening tools will do - shovel, spade, trowel, bucket.

Safety clothing e.g. a high visibility jacket, boots, safety helmet , or a toy workman such as ~@Bob the Builder

Duration 10-15 minutes

Role play provides an excellent way to involve children in dialogue. Clearly the person playing the role must have some background knowledge, but a little can go a long way. *Ask the archaeologist* (<http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/FAQ/Introduction.htm>) will provide you with the answers to the questions which children most frequently ask archaeologists. These include *What sort of tools do you use?* (<http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/FAQ/sorttools.htm>) and *What sort of clothes do you wear?* (<http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/FAQ/sortclothes.htm>)

The points the role player can bring out will obviously vary according to knowledge, and equipment s/he has available. Possible points to consider would include.

- Introducing the topic. Ask the children if they know what archaeologists do. If they've already done it, remind them of Activity 1 on this page.
- Talking about the clothing archaeologists wear. *Why do I wear a bright yellow jacket/safety boots?* Get the children to think about the conditions people work in: *Will I get cold? Or is it a hard job?*
- Talking about tools. *Does anyone know what sort of tool this is? What do you use it for? Have you ever used one? Do you help dig in the garden at home?*

- Talking about why you do things. Stress the idea that objects from the past help us find out about people in the past. If you have a suitable object, (perhaps something borrowed from a museums loan service). Clearly some information will need to be provided by the person/puppet in role but begin with getting the children to provide the information themselves. This will help to develop observational and descriptive skills. Questions could focus on
 - Descriptive adjectives. *What colour/shape is it?*
 - Opposites. *Is it rough or smooth/ broken or whole?*
 - Obtaining whole class views. *Hands up if you think this is old/new?*

Differentiation: Working with objects at KS2

A similar approach can also be used when working with children at KS2 as preparation for written work. List the answers to the children's questions in one colour on the whiteboard and information supplied by the person in role in another. This will then facilitate a simple word frame/ essay plan in three sections:

- We found out that...
- The archaeologist told us that...
- I thought the most interesting thing was that...

Some thoughts on using toys

Toys are an essential part of the Foundation Stage and KS1 classroom both as items of play and as directed teaching aids. I have seen activity 2 on this page very successfully carried out using a glove puppet, rather than with a live role player. However, it is important that they should look the part. 'Men at Work' figures are more in keeping with the way real archaeologists look than Indiana Jones. For more thoughts on this see the [What clothes do you wear?](#)

(<http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/FAQ/sortclothes.htm>)

Section of our presentation [Ask the Archaeologist.](#)

(<http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/FAQ/Introduction.htm>)

For follow-up work on sand tray excavations [click here.](#)

(<http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/EarlyYears/SandTray.htm>)

For more about WYAAS Education Services click here.

(<http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/eduas.htm>)