

Middens

Post-Visit Activity

WHO IS IT FOR?

- ◆ Young Scientists . . .
- ◆ Evolving Mathematicians . . .
- ◆ Emerging Linguists . . .
- ◆ Sprouting Historians . . .
- ◆ Budding Artists . . .

TARGETED LEVEL:
(Fourth Grade)

THE CHALLENGE:

The students will . . .

- ⇒ begin to develop an understanding of the importance of learning about the past through analysis of artifacts.
- ⇒ construct reasonable explanations and draw conclusions using given information and prior knowledge.

SAFETY ISSUES & CONCERNS:

- * Students need to demonstrate care with sharp objects.

WHAT'CHA NEED?

1. One large box with a lid or 12 shoe boxes with lids. (depending on if you choose one class Midden or individual or team Middens)
2. Items that depict the time period in which the students are currently living
3. Sand (optional)

TIME NEEDED FOR the post-visit activity:

Minimum of 45 minutes.

WORDS TO KNOW?

1. Archaeology
2. Archaeologists
3. Artifacts
4. Middens

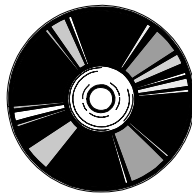
DID YOU KNOW . . .

Middens were areas for trash disposal?

A modern day Midden is a landfill?

In the *Pre-Visit Activity* the students learned to lay a grid in order to systematically excavate and record ancient artifacts. In the *On-Site Activity*, they used their newfound skills in order to explore and analyze an ancient Midden. In this *Post-Visit Activity* the students will incorporate both of these experiences in order to create a legacy of the present for the people of the future!

The students will be creating *Modern Middens*. These Middens should represent what the students believe would best exemplify themselves and the time period in which they live. At the Elm Fork Education Center (EFEC), they studied artifacts that could have been left by the North Texas Plains



Villagers, around 800 A.D. They learned that these discarded materials from people that lived long ago, were able to provide valuable clues, which they in turn, were able to use to help them understand certain aspects of that earlier culture.

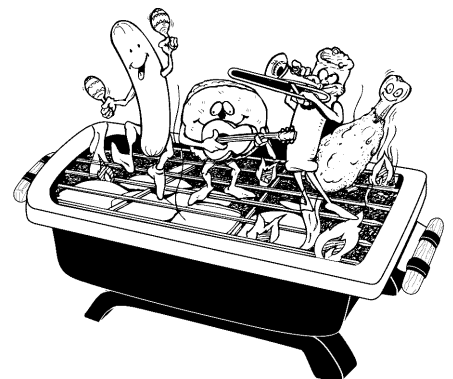


What will the people who live in North Texas 800 years from now think of the artifacts left from the people of today? Will electronic games, CD's, etc. appear as amazingly simple for the people of the future, as the artifacts that the students uncovered at the EFEC appear to us today?

The students also uncovered a variety of bones while excavating the Midden at the EFEC. Would the people in the future find as many bones in our trash as the students found in their Midden? Would they be the same types of bones? What will the people in the future find more commonly in our trash, which would represent the food that we eat; aluminum and/or tin cans; plastic wrappers? What did we learn about the people who left that trash heap?

Were they complex or simple? Were they farmers who raised their own food or were they hunters or gatherers?

What kinds of tools were found in the Midden? How do those tools compare to the ones we have today? One must read the clues contained within the Midden to unlock the mystery of the past. What clues will our *Modern Middens* provide?



EXTRA STUFF?

Related books/stories and on-line sources:

Archaeology:

www.upenn.edu/museum/

2. Archaeological Excavation:

www.civilization.ca/membrs/lobby.html

TEKS CONNECTIONS:

Science TEKS - Fourth Grade:

4.2 (C) - The students will analyze and interpret information to construct reasonable explanations from direct and indirect evidence.

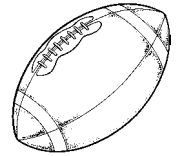
4.3 (C) – The students will represent the natural world using models and identify their limitations.

Denton ISD Science S.P.O. Fourth Grade:

S3.5 - The student will formulate and communicate conclusions about the effects of science on their world.

PROCEDURES:

Ready, Set, Go . . .



1. Discuss with the students their experience at the EFEC. Allow them the opportunity to share what they believe the artifacts they uncovered really tell us about some of the people who came before.
2. Encourage the students to tell the “story” of the Midden and the artifacts that were found within it. (You may choose to have the students write this story or create a skit and play it out in the classroom.)
3. The next step for the students is to tell their own story through actually creating their own Middens.
4. In preparation for the *Modern Middens* you may need to begin collecting the necessary materials weeks before the actual lesson.

You will want to enlist the help of the students in obtaining these materials, and you may want to enlist the help of parents as well.

5. Ask the students, with their parents consent, to bring to class at least one item which they believe would best represent them. These items will vary widely and may be anything from a favorite toy that has broken, an old blanket, a doll, a CD, broken hand held electronic games, etc.
6. Decide with your students whether you would like to make one very large class Midden, or if you would rather have each team of two students make their own Middens.

7. Place, in a row, the number of empty boxes that you will need for your Middens. (One large box for the class or possibly 12 smaller shoeboxes for the team Middens.)

8. Sort and count your “artifacts”. On the bottom of the Middens, place those items that you believe to be the oldest items. (You may choose to place sand on top of these items to create a layering affect.)

9. Place, on top of the oldest items, the items that you and the students feel to be slightly “younger” than the items on the bottom layer.

10. Discuss with the students, as the Middens are being made, the concepts of “old” and “new”. To many students, “old” means used and “new” means unused. In reality, there are items that can be very old and yet never have been used. There are items that can be purchased as new and yet were made to look very old and used. Some examples may be an old record album that was never taken out of its protective wrapper or a brand new piece of pottery that was made to look like pottery that would have been used hundreds of years ago.

11. When the students have completed the middle layer of their Middens, instruct them to place a layer of sand on top of these artifacts.

12. Instruct the students to place the “youngest” artifacts on top of this layer.

13. Have the students place the top of the box on the top of their Midden.

14. Decide with the students where you wish to bury your archaeological treasures. You may decide to bury the items somewhere on the playground. If this is the choice, be sure and obtain permission from your principal so as not to accidentally dig where power lines may be present, etc. You may decide to “bury” the items in the library and write a letter to the students of the future, directing them to where the archaeological treasures are hidden and as to when and by whom they can be opened. The possibilities are endless. Your class will have the most fun deciding where their Middens are to be placed!

