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CURRICULUM AND LESSON PLANS

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LESSON 9: A CAREER IN ARCHAEOLOGY

SUBJECTS

Social Studies, History, Archaeology

DURATION

30 to 45 minutes

CLASS SIZE

10 to 30 students

OVERVIEW

This lesson helps students explore a potential career in archaeology. The lesson addresses what archaeologists do and what knowledge and skills archaeologists need to do their job. Students will read about various archaeologists who worked on the investigation of the West Point Site.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore what archaeologists do and the skills and knowledge necessary to be an archaeologist
- To learn more about the archaeologists who worked at West Point

MATERIALS

Photocopies of "Interview With An Archaeologist", book *Young Oxford Book of Archaeology* p. 126 to 129, and notebook *Archaeology Resource Guide*.

BACKGROUND

Archaeologists study the human past by examining the material remains that people left behind. Archaeologists study sites, the places where human activity took place, and artifacts, the things people used for these activities. Archaeology is a field of study that incorporates a broad understanding of many subjects such as history, geography, botany, zoology, geology chemistry, and mathematics. Archaeologists require skills and abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, analyzing, documenting, drawing, measuring, weighing, photographing, computing, and organizing data.

In the United States, people can study archaeology in colleges and universities. Undergraduates can usually take archaeology courses through the Department of Anthropology. Undergraduates interested in a future career in archaeology are encouraged to participate in an archaeology field school to gain practical experience with the techniques of practicing archaeology. Field schools are offered by many colleges, universities, and organizations throughout the

country and internationally. Most professional archaeologists continue their education by receiving graduate degrees in archaeology. A Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) is usually required to teach archaeology at the college level.

Archaeologists can specialize in a wide range of topics. Some areas of specialization include historical archaeology, ethnoarchaeology, experimental archaeology, bioarchaeology, geoarchaeology, lithic analysis, botanical or faunal analysis, and ceramic analysis. Other archaeologists choose a cultural or geographical area of specialization such as Native American, Mayan, Egyptian, Greek, or Roman archaeology, or archaeology of North America, Meso-America, South America, the Middle East, Africa etc.

There are various different employment opportunities in archaeology including positions with state and federal agencies, tribes, private companies, universities, and colleges. State and federal agencies such as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service employ archaeologists on a full-time, permanent, and temporary basis. Today, many archaeologists are also employed as cultural resource managers for public agencies, contractors, and private property owners. Cultural resource management is a branch of archaeology that has expanded as a result of legislation requiring government agencies, the business sector, and the public to consider the impact that a proposed development project, such as a pipeline or road, could have on prehistoric and historic archaeological sites. Public agencies, private companies, and some universities are involved in investigating sites that are undergoing construction or development. Archaeologists associated with universities define their own research according to their areas of interest. Academic research is usually funded by colleges, universities, and grants.

Many archaeologists and cultural resource managers were involved in the West Point project. Some of these people have kindly allowed their profiles to be part of this curriculum. These profiles will provide students with a better understanding of how archaeologists and cultural resource managers were involved in the West Point project, how they became involved in archaeology and cultural resource management, and why they believe archaeology and cultural resources management is an important career.

PROCEDURE

1. Ask the students if they are interested in a career in archaeology.
2. Discuss what archaeologists do, and what skills and abilities archaeologists need to do their job.
3. Discuss the training necessary to become an archaeologist.
4. Discuss the public agencies, universities, and private companies that employ archaeologists. In particular, introduce the students to the branch of applied archaeology called cultural resource management.
5. Distribute the handouts "Interview With An Archaeologist" to the students.
6. Read the hand-outs "Interview With An Archaeologist".

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Invite an archaeologist to your class to speak about archaeology and the projects they work on. Have your students prepare questions to ask the guest archaeologist. Contact your State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO) to find archaeologists in your region.
2. Ask students to work individually or in small groups to write questions that they would like to ask an archaeologist. Then have students arrange to interview an archaeologist.
3. Talk to elders and other community members about their feelings and beliefs about archaeology. Invite these people to your class to present a variety of perspectives about archaeology.
4. Have students prepare a research paper, poster, or presentation about a famous archaeologist or archaeological site.
5. Use the Internet Resources to research colleges, universities, public agencies, and organizations that offer archaeology courses or programs such as field schools.

REFERENCES

- Larson, Lynn L. and Dennis E. Lewarch eds. The Archaeology of West Point. Seattle: Larson Anthropological/Archaeological Services, 1995.
- Moloney, Norah. The Young Oxford Book of Archaeology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Smith, Shelley, Jeanne Moe, Kelly Letts, Danielle Paterson. Intrigue of the Past: A Teacher's Activity Guide for Fourth through Seventh Grades. Dolores, CO: United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1996.

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARCHAEOLOGIST

Interview with Leonard Forsman, archaeologist.

Question: What was your involvement in the West Point project?

Answer: I served as a tribal monitor for the project, representing the Suquamish Tribe. I worked on unit excavation, water screening, and sorting. I later was hired as a full-time archaeologist for Larson Anthropological/Archaeological Services.

Question: How did you become interested in archaeology and cultural resource management?

Answer: I became interested in archaeology mainly through my work on the West Point Project. I was previously employed as Director of the Suquamish Museum, where I was introduced to archaeological collections and political issues regarding cultural resources management. I was introduced to cultural preservation originally through a cataloging project involving historic photos of Suquamish people including some ancestors.

Question: Why do you think a career in archaeology or cultural resource management is important?

Answer: I believe that working with archaeology is important because we have a responsibility for honoring our ancestors in a respectful way. We have additional responsibility to future generation to pass on the cultural resource information we preserve.

Question: What advice would you give a young person considering a career in archaeology or cultural resource management?

Answer: Learn to read and write well. Develop research skills. Maintain integrity and keep an open mind. Remember the human aspect of your work. You are working with the remnants of a living population, the spirits are alive.

Question: What would you tell people about protecting archaeological sites and preserving cultural resources?

Answer: I would emphasize the importance and value of cultural resources to our understanding of past and present cultures.

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARCHAEOLOGIST

Interview with Dr. Julie Stein, archaeologist.

Question: What was your involvement in the West Point project?

Answer: I was hired as a consultant to reconstruct landscape modifications that occurred during the time of occupation at the site. I collected sediment samples to determine the effects of down-dropping after the earthquake so a comparison could be made to the shell middens of San Juan County that had been only partially submerged. I wrote a report, which was published in the final monograph, and gave many presentations of the results at professional meetings and public venues.

Question: How did you become interested in archaeology and cultural resource management?

Answer: When I was in 7th grade I read stories of Louis Leakey finding fossils in East Africa. I loved to dig in the dirt as a child and used to bury treasures and pretend to find them again. I thought finding fossils would be like finding the best treasure ever. My mother would find articles in various magazines for me, and I did research reports for any high school writing assignment that allowed me to explore "the topic of your choice". My mother worked at the university in my town and encouraged me to go to that library and look at the textbooks about archaeology. My parents both indulged me in my dreaming. When I went to college I discovered you could take a class in archaeology, and go to a field school. I was hooked. My parents said I should do archaeology until the time came when I could not make enough money to support myself. I am still doing archaeology.

Question: Why do you think a career in archaeology or cultural resource management is important?

Answer: I continue doing archaeology because I am still curious about the past. I consider myself a researcher who is constantly trying to discover what happened long ago. Cultural resource management and archaeology are not two different things to me. They are both vehicles created to know about the past. CRM helps protect and save the precious places where the past is preserved. Without that conservation effort we will have nothing left to piece the puzzle together. Archaeology is how we know where those places are and what might be in them. We need both CRM and archaeology to enrich our lives about the past. I would say that archaeology and CRM may not "save the world, cure diseases, or feed more people". They are not subjects and concerns that help people get jobs or improve

their health. Archaeology and CRM enrich our lives and make life richer. We feel better when we know about the landscape and its history. It is like art, humanities, and sciences. A large portion of these subjects just are plain 'interesting' and knowing about them makes life more exciting.

Question: What advice would you give a young person considering a career in archaeology or cultural resource management?

Answer: Go to college and take a broad distribution of classes. Consider whether you like the ground and are a person who has enjoyed looking at the ground rather than the sky. Most archaeologists are people who as kids found stuff while walking along. Are you one of those kinds of people? Also, be sure you do not care about 'getting rich'. Most archaeologists do archaeology because they love the past, not for the money.

Question: What would you tell people about protecting archaeological sites and preserving cultural resources?

Answer: Do it.