

Early Artifacts of Grand Canyon

Duration: varies depending upon activities chosen, up to two fifty minute lessons

Location: classroom

Key Vocabulary: artifact, petroglyph, pictograph, pot shards, yucca, split twig figurines, archaeologist, Ancestral Puebloan people (formerly known as Anasazi)

Trunk Materials: *101 Questions About Ancient Indians of the Southwest* (pages 20-29), *Exploring the Grand Canyon* (Chapter 2), *Living at the Edge*, Artifacts of Grand Canyon PowerPoint presentation, photos of pots, split twig figurines, a set of large twist ties and directions for making split-twig figurines

Additional Materials and Equipment (Not Supplied): one large red clay pot broken into pieces (one piece for each student), several small broken pots, small squares of sand paper (one per student), small pieces of sandstone (one per student), charcoal pieces, brown paper bags, small pebbles for scratching images (one per student)

Enduring Understanding (Big Idea): The human history of Grand Canyon includes peoples of many previous centuries whose way of life can be seen as “snapshots” expressed in the artifacts they left behind.

Essential Question(s):

What evidence do we find that early people interacted with nature and each other at Grand Canyon?

Learning Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. List five examples of evidence left behind by early inhabitants of Grand Canyon.
2. Explain how artifacts help us understand when, where, and how these early people lived at Grand Canyon.

Background:

People have lived at Grand Canyon more or less continuously for at least 4,000 years with evidence of human activity in the area going back 10,000 years. These early people lived by hunting and gathering. They left no written history to help us understand their culture. Artifacts left behind by these people in the canyon include Clovis and Folsom point flint projectile points, split-twig figurines, yucca fiber sandals, baskets, pottery, petroglyphs etched on rock walls and pictographs painted on rocks. These artifacts (“things left behind”) are often found in caves and what remains of simple structures in the canyon. Small pieces of broken pottery called “shards” are found scattered on the ground in and around the canyon. Sometimes partial or whole pots are found.

First found embedded in the bones of a bison known to have been extinct for 10,000 years, the Folsom Point provides direct evidence of human activity in the canyon during that time. A Folsom Point was found in the canyon's Nankoweap area in 1993. The large Clovis Point most likely was used to hunt mammoth and other large animals.

Rock art was carved, pecked or painted on rocks and rock walls by early humans. Figures carved or pecked into rock are known as petroglyphs. Designs painted on rocks with pigment are called pictographs. Archeologists do not know for sure why rock art was made, or its particular meaning, but it may have been created for religious ceremonies, to tell a story, mark a trail, or leave a message. Some symbols seem to represent animals and humans but meanings of others can only be guessed.

Split-twig figurines are among the most interesting artifacts of early humans in the canyon. Made from a single strip of willow soaked in water, the wood strips were split lengthwise and then bent and twisted into the shapes of animals. Split-twig figurines have been found in the back of caves in the canyon, covered with rocks. Although their real purpose and meaning remains a mystery, most scientists believe they were a part of a ceremony or celebration related to a successful hunt. (See *Exploring the Grand Canyon* pages 24-25 and *Living at the Edge* pages 9-13 for more information.)

It is illegal to remove any objects from Grand Canyon. Should you find a canyon artifact take a photograph of it, write down its precise location and contact a park ranger immediately. You've begun your career as an archeologist! Under no circumstances should you touch or move an artifact.

Suggested Procedures:

1. Define and discuss the term "artifact" with students. Artifacts are objects that humans leave behind. Sometimes artifacts represent objects that are left behind on purpose, other times objects are left unintentionally. Sometimes artifacts represent someone else's "trash." They are certainly our treasures because of what they can tell us about how people used to live. What will be the artifacts of our time?
2. Show the Artifacts of Grand Canyon PowerPoint presentation. If you do not have the technological capability to show the presentation, share pictures of ancient artifacts with the class. Discuss each item and what they may have been used for and/or represented to early peoples.
3. Depending upon the time and materials available, choose one or more of the activities below enabling students to create their own "artifacts."

Activities:

1. Split-twig figures: Pass out materials and directions for making figures. Using long twist ties, proceed with making split-twig figures.
2. Pictograph/Petroglyph Activity 1: (Use sandpaper squares.) Using the pictures of petroglyphs in the presentation or trunk, have students draw a design with

pencil or chalk on their sandpaper square. Next students should paint over their design with tempera or acrylic paints.

3. Pictograph/Petroglyph Activity 2: (Alternate Project) Using large paper bags tear into appropriate size pieces. Crumple paper bag piece and then open up again. Using charcoal or black crayon, have students draw a pictograph design on paper.
4. Pictograph/Petroglyph Activity 3: (Use small pieces of sandstone.) Ask students to pencil a petroglyph design on their rock piece. Give each student a small pebble and ask them to scratch out their design on the sandstone.
5. Pottery Shards: Take broken pottery pieces and have students paint or use markers to imprint Ancient Puebloan pottery designs on their shard.
6. Archeological Re-creation: Bring in broken pots and have students work in groups to piece together their “artifact.” Do they have all the pieces? How might the pot have been used?

Evaluations (Assessment):

Ask students to write a paragraph that shares what they have learned about the ancient peoples who lived in and around the canyon and their cultures. Place these paragraphs in the Grand Canyon Folders, if they were previously made.

Extensions:

Using self-hardening clay, students can create a small pot and add designs.

Standards:

Arizona Social Studies Standards

S1:C2 Grade 4—P01; Grade 6—P03

S1:C3 Grade 5—P01

Arizona Writing Standards

W04: S2C6 P01,P02,P03,P07,P08

W04: S3C2 P01,P02,P03

W04: S1C5 P04

W04: S2C1 P01,P02,P03

W04: S2C2 P03,P06