

So, You're Still Not Sure About Archaeology And Eighth Graders?

Both are part of heritage education.

Meggett B. Lavin

Despite its cumbersome and sometimes controversial name, heritage education has been a successful method of teaching for classroom and community educators for more than 25 years.¹ While the approach has yet to be standardized in the field of education, museums, historic sites, historical societies, nature centers, and other community resources are working with schools at local and state levels to make collections and programs a vital part of the precollegiate curriculum.

For archaeologists interested in forging mutually beneficial partnerships between school and community resources, the task is easy to achieve. Existing curriculum frameworks already provide a solid foundation and sound pedagogical fit in many areas of the K-12 agenda. In a 1993 publication on community-school partnerships in heritage education, the National Trust for Historic Preservation found significant uniformity in objectives across the country, although between state and communities some differences do exist. At each grade level, the curriculum is intended to:

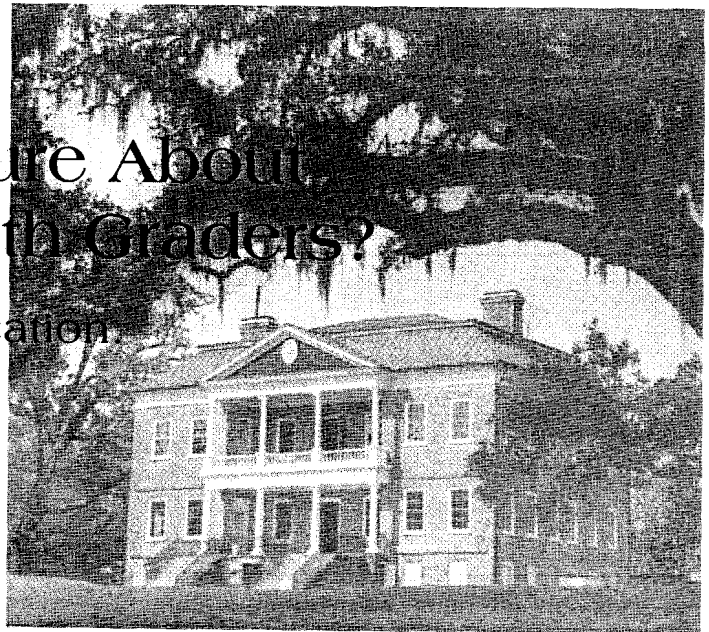
- expand students' knowledge in core subject areas such as history, geography, literature, mathematics, and science;
- strengthen basic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics;
- develop higher order thinking skills such as research, investigation, analysis, and interpretation; and
- reinforce responsible civic values and habits for the community's heritage and environment and an attitude of community responsibility.²

In Charleston, S.C., the social studies curriculum includes the following recommendations:

- Students need experiential learning through fieldwork. Extended classroom experiences allow students to study the built and natural environments as well as learn from museums, galleries, and other educational sites.
- Dependence on textbooks appears inversely related to the development of higher order thinking skills.
- Student projects that result from the investigation of real problems are the best measure of student achievement.³

Effective Applications

Archaeologists readily can see how the purpose and methodology of their work, especially its use of multiple disciplines, would have immediate applications to these guidelines. Add to this the general mystique of archaeology, the thrill of learning outside the classroom, permission to get



Drayton Hall, administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, was constructed between 1738-1742. Photos courtesy of Drayton Hall

dirty, a touchable study collection, a *real* archaeologist, and the bridge is almost built.

For all heritage educators, the critical underpinning for any school partnership is a coordinated effort to work with curriculum supervisors at county and state levels to identify exactly where information and programs are needed, and most importantly, to help to determine ways to work with teachers to meet classroom objectives, not add to them. This saves time, energy, and money for everyone, especially teachers. The goal is to be essential to the curriculum, not gilding.

Programs at Drayton Hall

At Drayton Hall, a National Trust historic site in Charleston, we have worked to meet the needs of both classroom education and public history since 1981. Although known for its outstanding and remarkably preserved Georgian-Palladian architecture, Drayton Hall—with its archaeology, material culture, built and natural landscapes, oral history, and documentary research—provides an opportunity to interpret nearly 300 years of plantation life and work in the South Carolina low country. Sharing the interdisciplinary “lessons” of the site as we discover them ourselves is a natural extension of our work to research, interpret, and preserve the property. Our goal is to strike a balance between the museum mission of the site and the needs of the school system by providing programs that complement the curriculum through content, skill building, and real-world application.

Since the site's primary artifact is a house, it is understandable that “learning to read a building for information” is a core offering. However, it is archaeology that offers the greatest resources for understanding the purpose and human activities associated with buildings being “read.” We have paired the two into programs that are so popular that schools attend from all

over the region and return every year. We use an inquiry model for all of our programs that helps students to analyze the purpose and meaning of objects as a way to understand the people who made and used them.

Initially, it may be the romanticism of archaeology and clichéd quest for “treasure” (gold, of course) that draws participation. The challenge is to harness these perceptions and channel them toward an understanding of archaeology as a systematic search for information, not weekend fun with a metal detector. This includes mastering the ability to see historical “trash” as a “treasure-trove of information” instead of “cool stuff.” Whether from above or below ground, objects represent people and a story that is easily lost.

Both of our archaeology programs, “Diaries in the Dirt” and “Plantation Excavation,” use above- and

below-ground archaeology to discover the purpose of a historic structure and the history of the people who used it. The process involves scientific method and inquiry, as well as methods of historical research drawing from an interdisciplinary collection of resources. “Diaries” is a hands-on discussion program that actually begins with an 18th-century out-building, while “Excavation” is a hands-on lab that recreates a previous excavation on the property at a seeded mock site.

Through a process of inquiry appropriate to grade level and experience—third grade is the youngest group able to participate—students 1) investigate the physical location of the historic site using observation and mapping skills; 2) identify human-made features and possible areas of human activity; 3) inventory available primary resources for infor-

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AN ACTIVITY FROM DRAYTON HALL

There are many ways to look at objects for information. The most notable and accessible are E. McClung Fleming’s model⁴ and a framework for students published by English Heritage in *A Teacher’s Guide to Learning from Objects*.⁵ We use various combinations depending on time and intent, with the major goals of being flexible and responsive to students’ questions and ideas. Consider how you might explore the meaning of the object pictured. Realizing the limitations of a photograph, add your questions to the following examples.

While looking at the object, discuss:

I. First Impressions

- What are your first reactions to this object?
- What senses are engaged by this object?

II. Physical Features

- What shape is it?
- How big is it? How much does it weigh?
- How many different parts does it have?
- Which is the top? bottom? inside? outside?
- Describe the surfaces of the object. Are they the same?

III. Construction

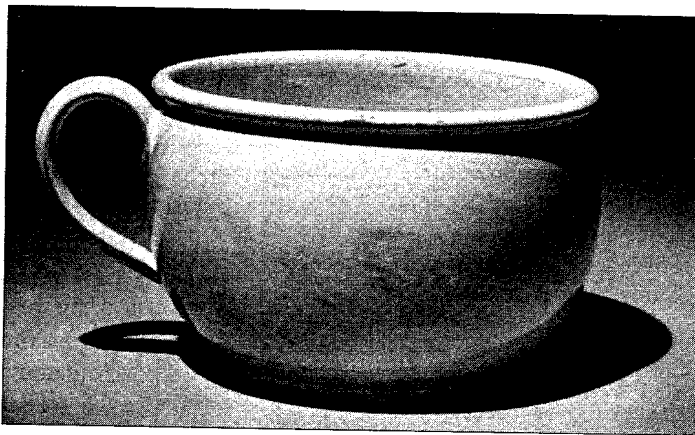
- What is this object made of?
- How would you make something like this?
- Who may have made this object?

IV. History

- Where was this object found?
- What other objects were found with it?
- Who may have used this object?
- How can we learn more about this or similar objects?

V. Function and Use

- Does this object remind you of other objects that you use every day?
- How many different ways could this object be used?
- What do you think this object is?
- Does it compare to other objects with the same use?
- How would you change it to work in a better way?



This object was found in two pieces under a brick building (the one pictured on page 1). It was below ground with a number of children’s marbles, parts of a china doll, pre-Civil War wine bottles, table ceramics, animal bones, and an 18th-century clay pipe. It is almost the size of a basketball.

VI. Interpretation

- What do we now know about the people who made and used this object?
- How does this object provide information about the technology, health, hygiene, trade, economics, and lifestyles of these people?
- What questions do you still have about these people that cannot be answered by this object? Where could we find the answers?

VII. Value

- Who would have valued this object in the past?
- Why would it have been valuable?
- Who would value this object now? Why?
- Should this object be saved or preserved? Why?

What is it?

A late 18th-century creamware chamber pot.

What might the brick building have been used for?

A privy. (Note: although initially a privy in the 18th century, the building was converted for other uses over time.)

Archaeology At Drayton Hall . . .

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mation such as architecture, landscape features, documents, oral history, paintings, drawings, photographs, and so forth; 4) develop questions and hypotheses for study; 5) explore the scientific process of an excavation, including tools and recording techniques; 6) examine artifacts individually and in context for information and interpretation; 7) interpret and evaluate the site for cultural meaning; 8) discuss the preservation and conservation issues inherent in removing artifacts for study and display; and 9) discuss the civic issues of site looting and cultural destruction.

Although the scope of our programs is quite broad and requires a number of staff members to facilitate, each section can be broken into individual lessons for a sole practitioner. As with any material culture program, at the heart is the opportunity to develop students' critical and creative thinking skills—a major goal of curriculum at any grade level. No matter how simple or elaborate the presentation or the

Parks . . .

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known facility. The visitor center contains an extensive and unique exhibit area, and site-produced audiovisual programs are available for viewing. Two-and-a-half miles of self-guided or audio-guided interpreted trails have been completed. There is an extensive interpretive program for educational groups, and an ongoing archaeological research program contributes to knowledge of the site. For information about programs, contact: (218) 285-3332.

Town Creek Indian Mound, Mount Gilead, N.C., held a book-signing party honoring Dr. Joffre Coe and the publication of his book, *Town Creek Indian Mound: A Native American Legacy*. Copies of the book will sell for \$45 hardback and \$18.95 paperback. Contact: Archie Smith or Carolyn Plowman, (910) 439-6802.

Wickliffe Mounds Research Center, Wickliffe, Ky., offered numerous events in the spring and summer, including a Woods Walk and Medicinal Workshop, a River Explorers Encampment, and an Archaeology Weekend. Weekend events included demonstrations of flint knapping, pottery making, finger weaving, shell and bone tool making, and hide tanning. Visitors also were able to watch the Middle Mississippi Survey field school excavating the site. Contact: (502) 335-3681.

Parkin Archeological State Park, Parkin, Ark., in its first full year being open to the public, developed 20 new programs and made 2,506 interpretive presentations to more than 33,000 visitors from 48 states and 19 foreign countries. School programs made up 451 of those presentations, reaching nearly 16,000 students. The park received the Arkansas State Parks Class II Park of the Year Award for 1994-1995 and also the award for the State Park volunteer program, honoring the efforts of the volunteers who have assisted with archaeological research, as well as the community support received from the Parkin Archeological Support Team. Contact: (501) 755-2500.

time available, a lesson with objects needs to move from the process of identification of its physical properties and use to its meaning and cultural value. While they might not have the archaeological or historical background, classroom educators will recognize that this process parallels Bloom's taxonomy, a table of inquiry that progresses from basic knowledge and comprehension to synthesis and evaluation.

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SOURCES

1. National Trust for Historic Preservation, "Focus on Heritage Education." *Historic Preservation Forum* 6(1): 5-45, January/February 1992.
2. Kathleen Hunter, *Heritage Education: A Community-School Partnership* (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, Information Series No. 73, 1993).
3. Charleston County Schools, "Research Findings for Effective Classroom Teaching." In *Curriculum Guide for Social Studies* (Charleston: Charleston County Schools).
4. E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model." *Winterthur Portfolio* 9, June 1974.
5. Gail Durbin, Susan Morris, and Sue Wilkinson, *A Teacher's Guide to Learning from Objects* (London: English Heritage Trust, 1991).

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