

TRASH TREASURES**To Dig Or Not To Dig****Overview**

Evaluating the need for a salvage archaeology project in a hypothetical scenario, students must balance such concerns as employment, cost effectiveness, and the value of local heritage.

Objectives/Skills

Students will

- prepare a role play, and discuss and communicate results
- conduct analysis, application, inferencing, and comparison

Subjects

Social studies, science, politics

Age Level

Grades 7 through 12

Materials

- copies of the scenario
- list of townsfolk (roles)

Time Required

Allow one hour to prepare for this activity and two or three 90-minute periods to complete it.

Background

Any construction or development project that receives federal funding must comply with the National Historic Preservation Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and often the National Environmental Protection Act. The common thread among these laws is a desire to preserve the past for public benefit. Most states also have laws to protect resources on their public lands.

Examination or excavation of archaeological sites often is done by private firms contracted for a specific project. Excavation is time consuming, and it often is conducted as salvage archaeology, done one step ahead of bulldozers. Such projects are important because they preserve information that otherwise would be lost. Once a site has been dug, whether by construction workers, artifact collectors, or scientists, some of the data at the site inevitably is lost. This information is precious to archaeologists and should be precious to the public. Each artifact and structure is a piece of the past, and we all have a right to that heritage.

Vocabulary

Contract archaeology — archaeology that is contracted by private firms or the government for projects to conform to local, state, or federal laws

Salvage archaeology — excavations carried out to save as much of a site as possible in a short period of time

Preparation

1. Copy the scenario and list of townsfolk (page 9) for each student.

2. Just before the activity, arrange the classroom to look like a city council meeting, with a table for council members, a podium, and seats for members of the community.

Procedure

1. Inform students that they will evaluate the need for a salvage archaeology project, then discuss the background information. Distribute copies of the scenario and list of townsfolk.

2. Ask students to read the scenario,

then discuss the circumstances and their implications. Ask them to choose roles, understanding that each character has a general attitude, which can be developed to logical conclusions.

4. To prepare for the town meeting, ask students to write a short summary of their position and how they intend to express themselves during the meeting.

5. Lead students in a role-playing activity in which they make presentations to the city council in support of their positions. Complete the activity with a town vote based on the possibilities raised in the scenario.

6. Discuss the results of the scenario and the pros and cons of each position. Guide the discussion with such questions as: Why would it be important to save the archaeological site? What is more important—jobs for the present and future, or saving the past? How would their position in the community affect their opinion in a controversy like the one in Copper Wells?

Assessment

Ask students to use a cause-and-effect diagram (page 10) to detail their personal positions on the Copper Wells controversy. Emphasize that to persuade others of the rightness of their viewpoint, they must be aware of its possible effects and anticipate the possible effects of other views.

This lesson plan was adapted from Trash Treasures/Tesoros de basura by Denise Aedan, Tim Aedan, and Christina Elnora Garza. Illustrations by Cynthia J. Wong Leonard. Translated into Spanish by Adriana Mendez Rodriguez. Trash Treasures is published by Earth-Time Curriculum, 335 E. Encore, Hanford, CA 93230; (209) 583-7511.