

## If Trash Could Talk

**Topic:** Anthropology

**Subtopic:** Tools and Methods

**Type:** Activity

**Level:** for grades 3 and up

**Time:** Approximately 1 period

**Origin:** OLogy

**Keywords:**

Archaeology--Field work • Excavations (Archaeology) • Refuse and refuse disposal • Science--Methodology

### MORE ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

If Trash Could Talk is part of OLogy, where kids can collect virtual trading cards and create projects with them. Here, they learn why ancient trash pits can be buried treasure chests for archaeologists.

- The activity begins by explaining how ancient trash can provide clues about how people lived.
- Then, kids are given step-by-step directions about how to go through a trash can from their house, chronicling and categorizing what they find.
- The activity includes a Trash Checklist, a printable PDF worksheet with a dozen questions to guide their investigation, and an interpretation of the trash they are viewing.

### TEACHER TIPS

Supplement a study of archaeology with a classroom activity drawn from this look at the important role trash can play in helping scientists study ancient civilizations.

1. Collect trash from several different classrooms in your building, and at least one pair of rubber gloves for each bag of trash.
2. Divide the class into small groups, one for each bag of trash you have collected.
3. Have each group decide who will be the garbage examiner(s) and note taker(s).
4. Give students the following questions to answer, which will help them investigate and interpret their trash.
  - What was the most common item in the trash?
  - What were the different categories or kinds of items you found?
  - What's the oldest thing in the trash? The newest?
  - Can you tell who used and threw out each piece of trash? Was it a male or a female? Child or adult?
  - What does all this data tell you about the classroom that disposed of this trash?

### STANDARDS

#### National Science Education Standards

##### Grades K-4:

*Science as Inquiry CONTENT STANDARD A:*

- abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry
- understanding about scientific inquiry

*History and Nature of Science CONTENT STANDARD G:*

- science as a human endeavor

##### Grades 5-8:

*Science as Inquiry CONTENT STANDARD A:*

- abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry
- understanding about scientific inquiry

*History and Nature of Science CONTENT STANDARD G:*

- science as a human endeavor
- nature of science

##### Grades 9-12:

*Science as Inquiry CONTENT STANDARD A:*

- abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry
- understanding about scientific inquiry

*History and Nature of Science CONTENT STANDARD G:*

- science as a human endeavor
- nature of scientific knowledge

**Curriculum Standards for Social Studies****Grades K-4:***Culture*

- explore and describe similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures address similar human needs and concerns.
- give examples of how experiences may be interpreted differently by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
- describe ways in which language, stories, folktales, music, and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture and influence behavior of people living in a particular culture.

*Individuals, Groups, and Institutions*

- identify roles as learned behavior patterns in group situations such as student, family member, peer play group member, or club member.

*Power, Authority, and Governance*

- examine the rights and responsibilities of the individual in relation to his or her social group, such as family, peer group, and school class.

*Production, Distribution, and Consumption*

- distinguish between needs and wants.

**Grades 5-8:***Culture*

- compare similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures meet human needs and concerns.
- explain how, information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
- explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture.

*Individuals, Groups, and Institutions*

- demonstrate an understanding of concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the inter-actions of individuals and social groups.

*Power, Authority, and Governance*

- examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare.

*Production, Distribution, and Consumption*

- give and explain examples of ways that economic systems structure choices about how goods and services are to be produced and distributed.

**Grades 9-12:***Culture*

- analyze and explain the ways groups, societies, and cultures address human needs and concerns.
- predict how data and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.

*Individuals, Groups, and Institutions*

- apply concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the connections and interactions of individuals, groups, and institutions in society.

*Power, Authority, and Governance*

- examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare.

*Production, Distribution, and Consumption*

- give and explain examples of ways that economic systems structure choices about how goods and services are to be produced and distributed.

**Michigan Framework for Social Studies Education*****Strand 5 – Inquiry***

- **Standard 5.2 – (Conducting Investigations)** – Students will conduct investigations by formulating a clear statement of a question, gathering and organizing information from a variety of sources, analyzing and interpreting information, formulating and testing hypotheses, reporting results both orally and in writing, and making use of appropriate technology.
  - **Benchmark 5.2.2 – (Early Elementary)** – Gather and analyze information in order to answer the question posed.
  - **Benchmark 5.2.6 – (Later Elementary)** – Gather and analyze information, using appropriate information technologies to answer the question posed.
  - **Benchmark 5.2.10 – (Middle School)** – Gather and analyze information using appropriate information technologies to answer the question posed.
  - **Benchmark 5.2.12 – (Middle School)** – Report the results of their investigation including procedures followed and possible alternative conclusions.

**Strand 2 - Geographic Perspective**

- **Standard 2.2 – (Human/Environment Interaction)** – Students will describe, compare, and explain the locations and characteristics of ecosystems, resources, human adaptation, environmental impact, and the interrelationships among them.
  - **Benchmark 2.2.2 – (Early Elementary)** – Describe the ways in which their environment has been changed by people, and the ways their lives are affected by the environment.
  - **Benchmark 2.2.3 – (Early Elementary)** – Suggest ways the people can help improve their environment.
  - **Benchmark 2.2.7 – (Later Elementary)** – Explain how various people and cultures have adapted to and modified the environment.
  - **Benchmark 2.2.8 – (Middle School)** – Locate, describe, and compare the ecosystems, resources, and human-environment interactions of major world regions.
  - **Benchmark 2.2.12 – (Middle School)** – Describe the consequences of human/environmental interactions in several different types of environments.