

Ancient Civilization and Archaeology



This resource was developed for elementary, middle, and high school teachers. These materials can be used to supplement and enhance students' ongoing studies in ancient civilization and archaeology.

AN EDUCATOR'S RESOURCE

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Introduction

What Is Archaeology?

To understand the significance of archaeology and studying artifacts, it is important to understand their political, historical, and social context.

Archaeology is the study of past peoples. Archaeologists learn about earlier communities by examining their material remains—the human-made artifacts, architectural features, and even plant and animal residues that people have left behind.

Early archaeological excavations—those of the 18th and 19th centuries—were often little more than haphazard treasure hunts. In contrast, today’s excavations are scientific and systematic, involving detailed data analysis and the careful recording of site information. Modern archaeologists do not seek “treasure”; they look for clues to help explain how people lived long ago and how they met their basic human needs. These clues often appear in the form of potsherds, stone tools, architectural ruins, and other evidence of human activity.

Digging for Artifacts

What happens on a dig?

Once digging begins, the process is slow and methodical. A site is usually overlaid with a grid of crisscrossing strings, creating a coordinate system that makes it easy to map the site. Workers (often volunteers) clear the dirt in each square, going down a few inches at a time. As they dig, they begin to notice changes in the soil types, which indicate successive levels of use or occupation—floors of houses, dirt laid down by wind or floods, or ash from fires. By carefully recording the depth of the objects, as well as their horizontal locations, the finds can be mapped accurately in three-dimensional space. This type of record-keeping becomes crucial in the later dating and interpretation of the site. Because excavation actually destroys an archaeological site, detailed field notes and photographs of the objects in situ are also produced. Archaeologists want to be able to reconstruct on paper the entire site and the location of all architecture and artifacts.

Depending on the type of soil, level of excavation, and goals of the dig, workers might use anything from bulldozers to picks and shovels to trowels to brushes and dental tools. Most often, they carefully scrape the surface with the side of a

trowel. They scoop the soil into buckets and, after separating out the visible artifacts, sift it through a screen to make sure nothing has been missed.

Where to Dig?

Before deciding exactly where and how to dig, an archaeologist formulates specific questions about the past that he or she wants to answer. Only then can the appropriate excavation approach be undertaken.

Archaeologists typically dig in the ground for remains of human occupation. In rare cases (such as Stonehenge in England or the pyramids of Egypt), evidence of past cultures is visible to the naked eye. In some regions (particularly in the Middle East), a tel will also indicate a rich spot for excavation. Sometimes accidental discoveries by local residents lead archaeologists to important sites. For example, the first Dead Sea Scrolls were accidentally uncovered in 1947 by a shepherd boy chasing after his flock in the Judean Desert. Their discovery led to organized excavations that turned up thousands more scrolls and fragments.

When sites are not clearly visible, historical records frequently help pinpoint the locations of past settlements. Archaeologists also conduct ground surveys, which involve walking across an area to look for surface clues such as potsherds or ashes from ancient hearths. Before a new building or housing development goes up, archaeology teams are often called in to survey the area to determine if there are any sites that might be destroyed by the construction.

In recent decades, archaeologists have developed various forms of “remote sensing” to identify potential sites. These methods include airborne and infrared photography, ground radar, magnetic-field recording, and metal detection.

What happens after the digging is done?

Once the hard work of excavating is finished, archaeologists try to make sense of the materials they have uncovered. This is often the most time-consuming part of the process.

First, objects that are particularly delicate or unstable may require conservation before they can be studied. Artifacts are then inventoried, classified, and analyzed. In trying to interpret a site, an archaeologist will look not



only at individual objects but also at the context—the relationships among the objects and between the objects and the architecture and landscape. Frequently, he or she will enlist the help of other specialists—botanists, cultural anthropologists, zoologists, and geologists—in analyzing and interpreting the relevant artifacts, ecofacts, and features.

Archaeologists use the data they collect to answer broad questions about the cultures they study, based on their initial research goals. For example, what was the social structure of a given group like? What did they eat? Because ancient artifacts generally tell us relatively little about individuals and their beliefs, the interpretation of archaeological remains tends to focus on the activities of groups of people, especially as they interact with and construct their physical and social environments. Unfortunately, the archaeological record is always incomplete—generally, only a small portion of most sites is excavated, and many materials from the past do not survive the ravages of time. Archaeologists must do their best with the evidence at hand to help us understand the lives and cultures of those who came before.

How Do Archaeologists Determine How Old Things Are?

One important task of the archaeologist is determining how old the different layers at the site are. These layers, or strata, reflect different periods of occupation over the years. The strata accumulate over time, with the remnants of the most ancient inhabitants constituting the bottom layer and the most recent ones appearing on top. This layering is known as stratigraphy. Relative dates can be ascertained through careful examination of a site's stratigraphy. Objects found in lower strata can generally be assigned to earlier time periods. When objects found at a site are similar to dated objects at another site, the latter helps establish the former's relative date.

Another technique for relative dating is seriation. Like modern fashion, the styles of ancient pottery and other items change over time. By mapping these changes, archaeologists can develop a powerful tool for establishing the relative dates of groups of objects and the strata in which they are found.

In many cases, absolute dates can also be established. Sometimes evidence of an independently datable historical event (such as an earthquake, war, or king's reign) is found within a particular stratum. In certain environments, dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) can also be used. In an increasing range of contexts, newer high-tech methods—including radiocarbon dating, electron spin resonance, and potassium-argon dating—can provide an absolute date range.

Studying Ancient Israel

Why study the ancient Israelites?

The story of ancient Israel unfolded on the fringes of the larger and more powerful civilizations of the ancient Near East—Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, Persia, and Rome. Because the Israelites interacted with the other peoples of the region, often living under their control, studying them offers rich insights into the cultural milieu of the ancient Near East and how a people adapted to changing circumstances.

How do we know about the ancient Israelites?

Our knowledge of the ancient Israelites comes from several sources—biblical texts, ancient writings and inscriptions, and archaeological discoveries. This guide focuses on the information gleaned from archaeological discoveries, but is supplemented with information from other sources. The emphasis is on the Iron Age (1200 BCE–586 BCE), the Persian through early Roman periods (515 BCE–70 CE), and the Roman-Byzantine periods (after 70 CE).

What is the history of ancient Israel?

Evidence of the Israelites as a distinct cultural group first appears in the archaeological record around 1200 BCE. The Near East was in a period of upheaval at that time—Egyptian power was waning, and no new empire was set to exert control over the region (see the map below). The Israelites lived in



small villages in the hill country of central Canaan, sharing the land and many cultural attributes with other Canaanite inhabitants. Israelite religion was closely tied to the land and the yearly cycle. An agricultural people, the Israelites celebrated annual festivals at times of planting and harvest and made offerings of animals and other agricultural products to their god. Although animal sacrifice was common in the ancient Near East, the worship of a single god was unique.

In the late 11th century BCE, the Israelite villages became unified into a modest kingdom that stretched from the borders of Jordan and Syria to Philistia. At the beginning of the 10th century, David established the kingdom's capital in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was not only the political center; it was also the site of the Israelite Temple, where the priestly class presided over an elaborate sacrificial rite. This united kingdom, however, lasted less than a century; in 928 BCE, Israel split in two. The Northern Kingdom kept the name Israel, and the Southern Kingdom was known as Judah.

The period of the divided kingdom lasted about 200 years, during which both monarchies were weakened by frequent conflicts with the Assyrians, other neighboring states, and even each other. In 722 BCE, the Assyrians sacked Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom and, as was their practice, exiled the majority of the population to far-flung regions of the empire. This marked the end of the Northern Kingdom (and the beginning of 3,000 years of speculation about the "ten lost tribes of Israel").

Judah survived, but succumbed to the overwhelming power of the Babylonian Empire in 586 BCE. King Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 BCE) destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and exiled the Judahite leadership and elite to Babylon. Unlike the Assyrians, however, the Babylonians allowed the Judahites to maintain their communal life in exile. The Israelite religion was able to survive among the Judahites, but it had to adapt in order to do so. No longer rooted solely in their homeland and unable to make sacrifices in their Temple, the Judahites created new traditions and new forms of worship based on the reading of holy text and prayer instead of sacrifice. The Jewish religion was born.

When King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylonia and allowed the Judahites to return to their homeland in 536 BCE, many chose to stay in Babylon. Those who did return to Judah rebuilt the Temple and restored the sacrificial cult. During the period of the Second Temple, the synagogue became an increasingly important center of Jewish life alongside Temple worship—especially outside the land of Israel—as a place where the Torah was read.

The land of Israel came under Greek rule with the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE. The Greeks allowed the Jews to practice their religion freely until the middle of the 2nd century BCE, when the Syrian Greek king restricted Jewish practice in the land of Israel. A Jewish army, led by Judah Maccabee, mounted a revolt. After their miraculous victory,

the Jews rededicated the defiled Temple and re-established an independent Jewish state. This is the origin of the holiday of Hanukkah, which means "dedication."

The Romans took control of Israel in 63 BCE, and in 66 CE the Jews attempted another revolt. The uprising was unsuccessful. The Romans crushed the revolt and destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE. Following the destruction, Judaism adapted again. Sacrifice and the institution of the priesthood were discontinued, and rabbinic Judaism emerged as the mainstream of Jewish life. With its focus on prayer, study, and scriptural interpretation, the rabbinic tradition enabled Judaism to survive through the generations.

Questions for Discussion

What images or ideas does the word "archaeology" bring to mind? What do you know about the work of archaeologists? How is an archaeologist different from a paleontologist or an historian? Discuss students' preconceptions and clarify any misconceptions they might have.

Why is it important to study the past? How can archaeology help us better understand the world today?

Try to imagine what your neighborhood might have been like in ancient times. What questions would you ask the people who lived there? Are these questions that archaeologists could answer? Why or why not?

Imagine it is the year 3000 CE. Future archaeologists have discovered your classroom. What kinds of artifacts or features will they find? What won't they find? What conclusions do you think they will draw about your way of life?



Artifacts: Storage Jar



Storage Jar

North Africa, 1st century BCE–2nd century CE

11 5/8 in. (29.6 cm)

The Jewish Museum, New York Gift of the Betty and Max Ratner Collection,

1982–27 Digital image © 2006

The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

Close Looking / Visual Analysis:

- Describe the shape of this object. What problems might a jar with this shape present? Why might someone make a jar with a pointy bottom? If you wanted to stand this jar upright, how would you do that?
- This jar is about three feet tall. What do you think it was made to hold? What makes you say that?
- How do you think this jar was made?

About the Artifact

This large transport amphora from the Roman Period is more than three feet tall. Many jars like this—with pointed bottoms and originating from around the Mediterranean region—have been found in Israel. They offer evidence of an extensive shipping trade under the Roman Empire, reaching ports from Spain to Syria and beyond.

These vessels probably contained wine imported from foreign vineyards. Their shape was ideal for withstanding the pressure of the fermented liquid and for packing and transport. Such jars did not necessarily stand upright during shipping; they were sealed and packed tightly into the angled corners of a ship's hull. For storage, they may have been placed upright in clay or wooden stands, set in holes in the ground, or laid on their sides. Products from Israel were exported as well.

Pottery

Most of the artifacts uncovered by archaeologists working in the Middle East are made of clay. Such objects include cups, bowls, plates, jugs, cooking pots, oil lamps, storage jars, and figurines. One reason pottery is so common at archeological sites is that clay was widely used in the ancient world. It is plentiful and easy to obtain from clay beds. Clay is also relatively easy to work with, and when baked in a kiln becomes strong and waterproof. It was thus a very useful material for making everyday items.

Another reason is that pottery holds up better over the centuries than many other materials. Wood and most textiles decompose, but pottery does not. Although the ancient Israelites certainly used wood for furniture, building construction, and other purposes, archaeologists rarely find wooden artifacts from ancient times. In addition, because undecorated pottery was probably inexpensive to buy, clay items were often thrown away when they were no longer needed and were not saved or recycled. These discarded artifacts are often discovered by archaeologists.

People started making pottery thousands of years ago. By the second millennium BCE, the invention of the potter's wheel made the production of clay pots faster and easier. Another technological advance occurred in the Roman Period, when clay lamps began to be mass-produced in molds.

Pottery offers insight into practical aspects of the daily life of groups of people, but it also reflects their cultural identity. Different cultures produced different styles of pots and decorated them with different kinds of designs. Today, archaeologists use the different styles of pottery to trace the interactions and movements of ancient peoples.

Ancient Trade

The early Israelites engaged in trade on a local basis, exchanging agricultural products, consumer goods, and precious materials. With the rise of a national infrastructure and the influence of powerful empires in Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean, trade began to occur on an international scale. During the Roman Period, for example, glass, jewelry, and wine were shipped throughout the Mediterranean basin. Trade also helped spread ideas, technologies, and artistic styles across the ancient world.

Some trade was done over land, but whenever possible, it was cheaper and faster to move goods by sea or river. Harbor cities flourished with the international trade. In the 1st century BCE, King Herod of Judaea built the city of Caesarea (named for Caesar Augustus, the first emperor of Rome) with a magnificent port.

For Further Discussion:

- After giving students ample opportunity to examine this object, lead them in a discussion of related topics and themes:
- This jar was used to carry wine from Italy to Israel. Why do you think people shipped wine and other products hundreds of miles from one place to another? Why do countries import and export consumer products today?
- How have the methods and technologies associated with shipping and trade changed over the centuries?
- Why do you think this jar is so simply made and not decorated? What kinds of objects could you compare it to today?
- How do you think people kept the wine from spilling out of jars like this?

Research Topics / Content Connections:

- Ancient Trade and Commerce Pottery
- The Roman Period



Artifacts: Stamped Jar Handle



Stamped Jar Handle,
Israel, late 8th century BCE
Impressed and fired 2 1/2 x 3 x 2 in. (6.4 x 7.6 x 5.1 cm).
The Jewish Museum, New York Purchase: Archaeology Acquisition Fund,
JM 12-73.271 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York
Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

Close Looking / Visual Analysis:

- Look carefully at this artifact. Do you think this is a complete object or a part of something bigger? What makes you say that?
- What can you say about the decoration on this object? Describe what you see? What does the picture look like to you?
- How do you think this decoration was created?

About the Artifact

Numerous archaeological sites in Israel have turned up storage jars with stamped handles like this. Frequently, the jars were in fragments and only the handles were saved. The seal impressions on the handles feature the word “lamelekh,” along with the name of a place in Israel. (Click here to watch a video that explains more about these seals.)

Four different place names have been found on lamelekh seals; the one pictured here cites the city of Hebron. Each lamelekh seal also features one of two images—either a four-winged scarab (a kind of beetle) or a two-winged sun-disk (the circle of the sun with wings on either side) like this one. These were popular Egyptian symbols associated with the sun god and more generally with power; the sun-disk was also a divine symbol in the Near East. The narrow mouths of the lamelekh jars suggest they were probably designed to hold liquids or grain.

Over the past few decades, several theories have been put forward to explain the significance of the lamelekh jars. Some scholars believed the jars were filled with agricultural products that were sent to the king as taxes. Others hypothesized that they contained supplies for the king’s staff and troops or that they held oil and wine produced at four royal estates. Still others suggested that the jars might have been marked to show that their capacity was officially standardized.

Recent studies have indicated that all lamelekh jars found in Israel were made from the same clay and were therefore manufactured in the same place. The place names thus do not specify the origins of the jars. In addition, measurement of the capacity of complete jars indicates they are not uniform in size. Therefore, the seals on their handles could not represent official acknowledgment of a standardized size. The exact purpose of these jars remains unknown.

For Further Discussion:

After giving students ample opportunity to examine this object, lead them in a discussion of related topics and themes:

- This is part of the handle from a clay storage jar. The stamped marking includes the word “lamelekh,” meaning “belonging to the king.” Why would someone want to mark a storage jar? How do people mark their belongings today? Why do they do so?
- Lamelekh storage jars may have held grain, wine, or oil. Instead of clay storage jars, what do we use today that serves a similar purpose?
- Discuss the theories originally proposed to explain the significance of the lamelekh jars. What kinds of evidence would help support or disprove any of these theories (e.g., location, historical context, material, and size)? What is the significance of the recent evidence?
- The ancient Hebrew alphabet used on the lamelekh seal was one of the first alphabetic writing systems ever developed. Earlier writing systems used pictographs (stylized pictures) to stand for whole words (instead of letters standing for individual sounds). What is the benefit of an alphabetic system?
- Writing systems generally developed along with governments. Why would governments need writing systems? How else do you think writing contributed to ancient civilizations? How would life today be different if we didn’t have a way to write things down?

Further Information

Cities and States

Lamelekh jars offer direct evidence for centralized rule by a king in 8th-century BCE Israel, although monarchical rule is actually believed to have begun in the 11th century BCE. The rise of the monarchy is marked in archaeological excavations by the sudden appearance in Israelite territory of new city plans, including fortification walls and large city gates. Many cities also included fortresses and palatial residences. Such building projects could not have happened without the organization of a centralized government and resources collected in the form of taxes and conscripted labor. In exchange for these taxes, the government protected the people from enemy attack and maintained order in the land. The ancient Israelites faced frequent wars with their neighbors.

The Development of Writing

The presence of Hebrew lettering on lamelekh jars and other finds from Israel suggest some degree of literacy in the 1st millennium BCE. The earliest forms of writing developed in Mesopotamia and Egypt. These were pictographic writing



systems, in which a word was represented by an abstracted picture. The subsequent emergence of alphabetic writing in the area of the eastern Mediterranean was an important innovation. Alphabets had only a couple of dozen letters, rather than thousands of characters. This brought literacy within the reach of common people and took it out of the hands of specialized scribes. The alphabetic system we use today is descended from that of the Phoenicians and Israelites.

Research Topics / Content Connections:

- Development of Writing Systems
- Growth of Governments
- Iron Age Israel



RELATED ARTIFACTS

Stamped Jar Handle



Israel, late 8th century BCE, clay: impressed and fired 2 1/2 x 3 x 2 in. (6.4 x 7.6 x 5.1 cm).

The Jewish Museum, New York Purchase: Archaeology Acquisition Fund, JM 12-73.271 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

This is a lamelekh seal impression. It is the same piece illustrated immediately above the group shot. The seal indicates that the jar belonged to the king, Hebron.

Stamped Jar Handle



Israel, late 8th century BCE, clay: impressed and fired 2 x 2 7/8 x 1 1/4 in. (5.1 x 7.3 x 3.2 cm).

The Jewish Museum, New York Purchase: Archaeology Acquisition Fund, JM 12-73.280 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

This handle fragment bears a stamp with a person's name: Meshullam [son of] Ahimelekh. These stamps with names were found on the same jars with the lamelekh stamps and are thus part of the same phenomenon. There has been much debate over who the individuals were; some proposed they were royal officials, others that they were private individuals, possibly potters. It now seems clear that they were stamped at the place where the jars were made and had something to do with jar production. Click [here](#) to watch a video that explains more about these seals.

Artifacts: Lamp



Lamp, Israel, 800-586 BCE,
clay: wheel-turned, slipped, and fired, 1 1/4 x 5 in. (3.2 x 12.7 cm).
The Jewish Museum, New York Purchase: Archaeology Acquisition Fund, JM 12-73.22
Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

Close Looking / Visual Analysis:

- How is this object shaped? What do you think this object is made of? How do you think it was produced? What makes you say that?
 - Look carefully at the markings and colors on this object. Describe them. What do you see that might offer a clue to the object's use?
-

For Further Discussion:

- After giving students ample opportunity to examine this object, lead them in a discussion of related topics and themes:
 - What do you think this object was used for?
 - Some people think it looks like a pitcher for pouring liquid. Why would it not have been good for that purpose?
 - Why do you think people generally used clay to make their oil lamps and other everyday items? What are the benefits of clay? What are some of the disadvantages of using clay?
 - Study the design of this oil lamp carefully. What do you think might be some drawbacks of this design?
 - Imagine you had to rely on lamps like this to create light in your home. How would that affect the way you live your life?
 - The design of oil lamps changed over time. Think about a type of technology that you use today—computers, TVs, phones, etc. How has it changed over time? Why do such changes occur?
-

About the Artifact

Long before electric lights or even candles were invented, oil lamps were used to produce light for everyday needs, as well as for religious ceremonies. This early style of lamp was made on a potter's wheel. It started out as a bowl; one end was then pinched to create a spout. The user poured oil into the bowl, set a wick made from flax in the spout, and then lit the oil-soaked wick on fire. Evidence of the flame can still be discerned in the blackened spout of this lamp.

The design of oil lamps underwent a series of changes over the centuries. Earlier lamps were open bowls with four pinched spouts. In the early 2nd millennium BCE, a transition occurred to open bowls with just one folded spout, like this one. This basic form continued until the Hellenistic Period (4th century BCE).

Further Information

Pottery

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Research Topics / Content Connections:

- Ancient Technology and Innovation
- Pottery
- Daily Life in Ancient Israel



RELATED ARTIFACT

Lamp



Israel, second half 3rd- 5th century CE, clay: mold-formed and fired 2 1/4 x 5 1/2 x 4 1/4 in. (5.7 x 14 x 10.8 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York Gift of the Betty and Max Ratner Collection, 1981-75

The Iron Age, open-bowl style of oil lamps eventually developed into the closed form you see here. The closed top prevents spillage of the oil. Many lamps of this shape with from three to eight wick holes in a row across the front were found in tombs. Because one-wick lamps were still being produced at this time, the significance of the multiple wicks is unknown.

Discuss:

- Compare this oil lamp to the previous example. How are they similar? How are they different?
- How many wick holes does this lamp have? Why do you think it has so many?
- Why do you think this lamp is more decorated than the previous example? How do you think the decorations were applied?
- Which one would you prefer to use? Why?



Artifacts:

Judaea Capta Coin of Vespasian



Coin Judaea Capta Coin of Vespasian , Rome, Italy, 71 CE, gold 3/4 in. (1.9 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York Gift of the Samuel Friedenberg Collection, X1983-88 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

Close Looking / Visual Analysis:

- Describe the pictures on this coin. What do you think they mean?
 - Look at the words. Although they are written in Latin, you might be able to recognize some of them or parts of some of them. What clues do they give you about the meaning of the pictures?
 - How is this coin similar to or different from the currency we use today? What kinds of images, words, or symbols appear on our money?
-

For Further Discussion:

After giving students ample opportunity to examine this object, lead them in a discussion of related topics and themes:

- Why do you think it was so common for portraits of kings and emperors to appear on ancient money? Is it the same reason we put presidents' faces on our money?
 - Coins were often used to publicize important events. Why do you think that is? What methods do governments use to publicize events today? How has technology changed the way we disseminate information?
 - Do you think coinage was an improvement over earlier forms of trade? Why?
-

About the Artifact

The coin shown here is known as a *Judaea Capta* (Latin for "Judea Captured") coin. The Roman government issued these coins to celebrate their victory over the Jews in 70 CE, during which they destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem. This triumph of paganism over monotheism was particularly significant to the Romans, who were losing increasing numbers of upper-class citizens to Judaism and Christianity.

One side of the coin features a portrait of Emperor Vespasian (69–79 CE), who was the emperor at the time, and his name is Latin; on the other side is a depiction of a mourning Jewess sitting beneath a trophy. Below her is the word "Judaea." Some *Judaea Capta* coins, like this Roman one, depict Vespasian. Others show Titus, the general who conquered Jerusalem and later became emperor.

Coins from different lands traveled quickly throughout the Near East as a result of international trade. Because coins had such wide distribution, governments often used them to celebrate or publicize important events.

Further Information

Coinage

Metal coins were first used as money in Anatolia (now Turkey) in the 7th century BCE. Their use quickly spread throughout the ancient world. Although people had previously traded precious metals, the first coins (made of electrum, a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver) were different because they had an officially standardized weight and value. Their standardized weight and small size made trade more convenient and efficient.

From the beginning, coins typically displayed portraits of the rulers who produced them. In many cases, coinage offers the only known images we have of these ancient rulers. Because coins frequently depict reigning kings and specific historical events, they can often be dated with a high degree of accuracy. They can also help to date occupation levels or other artifacts found along with them. In addition, because coins may be found thousands of miles from their origins, they can shed light on ancient trade patterns.

Research Topics / Content Connections:

- Trade and Commerce in the Ancient World
- Ancient Rome
- The Destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE



RELATED ARTIFACT

Bangle



Israel, 1000–586 BCE, bronze: cast and hammered Diameter: 3 1/8 in. (8 cm) The Jewish Museum, New York Gift of the Betty and Max Ratner Collection, 1981-111 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

In ancient times, both men and women wore jewelry and were sometimes buried with such cherished possessions. A smaller bangle might have been worn as a bracelet; a thicker one was probably an anklet.

In Israel, metal jewelry, including bracelets, anklets, and earrings, may also have been used as currency before the introduction of coinage. If an individual wanted to make a purchase, he or she would have weighed the bangles at the time of sale in order to determine their value. The standard unit of weight was the shekel—equal to about 11.4 grams (0.4 ounces). Other weights included the beqa (half a shekel), the pim (two-thirds of a shekel), and the netzef (five-sixths of a shekel). Stone weights marked with these different denominations have been found in excavations throughout Israel.

Discuss:

- These bronze objects were probably worn as bracelets or anklets. How are they similar to jewelry people wear today? Why do you think people wore jewelry in ancient times?
- Bangles are frequently found in ancient graves. Why do you think people would want to be buried with their jewelry?
- Bronze bangles were used as currency, as well as jewelry, because the material was considered very valuable. What makes something valuable in a society? Who or what determines its value?

- What kinds of objects are considered valuable today? What do we do with valuable objects? What objects are most valuable to you? Why?
- What do you think would be the disadvantages of using jewelry, rather than coins, as currency?



Artifacts: Shipping Jug



Shipping Jug, probably Italy, 1st-2nd century CE, glass: mold-blown, 6 5/8 x 2 11/16 x 2 5/8 in. (16.8 x 6.8 x 6.6 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York Gift of Judith Riklis, 1981-289 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

Close Looking / Visual Analysis:

- What material do you think this bottle is made of? Why do you say that?
- Take a look at the shape of this bottle. Why would it be good for shipping? Why might it not be?
- What might be put in this bottle?
- Notice the handle on this bottle. Does it look like an effective handle to you? Why or why not? How might it have been used?

For Further Discussion:

After giving students ample opportunity to examine this object, lead them in a discussion of related topics and themes:

- Do you think it is rare or common for archaeologists to find bottles like this from before the 1st century BCE. Why do you think that is?
- Glass was originally considered a very valuable material in the ancient world, but by the 1st century CE, it was becoming much less expensive. What could explain that?
- This bottle may have been used to ship liquids across the Mediterranean Sea. Why do you think people shipped wine and other products hundreds of miles from one place to another? Why do countries import and export consumer products today?
- How have the methods and technologies associated with shipping and trade changed over the centuries?

About the Artifact

Square and hexagonal jugs with thick walls were among the more common glass forms of the early Roman Empire. Evidence for their function and dating comes from the discovery, in the ruins of a shop at Herculaneum (destroyed in 79 CE), of a set of square jugs packed in straw in partitioned boxes ready for shipping. Square, thick-walled, mold-blown jars like this were ideal for shipping. They were strong, uniform, and could be efficiently packed. Archaeologists have not found any of these bottles with their contents intact, but it is assumed that they mostly held liquids.

This bottle was created through a process known as mold-blowing. A glassblower would blow a glob of hot glass into a wood or clay mold, and the glass vessel would take the shape of the mold. A benefit of mold-blowing was that it made possible the mass-production of utilitarian wares of uniform size and shape.

It was not possible in ancient times to make a truly colorless glass. The light blue color of the glass in this example is typical of glass made in Italy. "Clear" glass from Syria, Lebanon, and Israel had a greenish tinge.

Further Information

Ancient Trade

The early Israelites engaged in trade on a local basis, exchanging agricultural products, consumer goods, and precious materials. With the rise of a national infrastructure and the influence of powerful empires in Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean, trade began to occur on an international scale. During the Roman Period, for example, glass, jewelry, and wine were shipped throughout the Mediterranean basin. Trade also helped spread ideas, technologies, and artistic styles across the ancient world.

Some trade was done over land, but whenever possible, it was cheaper and faster to move goods by sea or river. Harbor cities flourished with the international trade. In the 1st century BCE, King Herod of Judaea built the city of Caesarea (named for Caesar Augustus, the first emperor of Rome) with a magnificent port.

Ancient Glass

Glass is made by melting a certain kind of sand. The earliest glass vessels were produced in the 2nd millennium BCE using the "core-forming" method. Molten glass was molded around a clay core. After the glass hardened, the core was removed and the glass container remained. Because this was a slow, laborious method, glass was originally considered a very valuable and luxurious item.

The 1st century BCE saw a transition from core- and mold-formed glass to glass made by blowing into a glass bulb through a blowpipe. Although it is not clear where this technique was invented, free-blown glass vessels quickly became widespread throughout the eastern Mediterranean during the late 1st century BCE. The earliest datable examples come from Israel. The speed with which blown-glass could be produced contributed to its popularity and accessibility. Soon after blown-glass was invented, glassworkers discovered it could be blown into molds, allowing mass production of bottles and highly decorated flasks. Glass became widely used and no longer the luxury it once was.

Research Topics / Content Connections:

- Ancient Glass
- The Roman Period
- Trade and Commerce



RELATED ARTIFACT

Bowl



Eastern Mediterranean, late 1st -4th century CE, glass: free-blown, tooled, and wheel-ground. 3 7/16 x 12 1/16 in. (8.7 x 30.6 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York Gift of Frieda Schiff Warburg, S 1214 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

This bowl from the Eastern Mediterranean was produced in the Roman style. It was made through the process of glass-blowing, which required the glassworker to connect a blowpipe to the molten glass. Air was blown into the molten glass as a means of enlarging its size. While the glass softened, the worker could also modify its shape. It was then removed from the blowpipe and allowed to cool. In the case of this bowl, lines were carefully incised in it after it hardened in order to create additional designs. This artifact reflects the cosmopolitan nature of life in the land of Israel at a time when wealthier residents sought to fill their homes with Roman-style items.

The Romans were known for their high level of glass production in the first centuries of the Common Era. Skilled glassworkers could produce cups, bowls, and other items quickly and cheaply. Glass vessels became especially popular for holding food and drink because they were lightweight and did not carry the smell found in many other materials.

Discuss:

- What material do you think this bowl is made of? Why do you say that? What do you think it might have been used for? What might you use it for today?
- The Romans preferred to make cups and bowls out of glass, rather than clay. Why do you think that might have been? What might be the disadvantages of glass?
- Compare this bowl with the glass shipping bottle. The bottle was made by blowing molten glass into a square mold. The bowl was “free-blown” by a glassworker, without using a mold. What do you think are the advantages or disadvantages of the different methods?
- During the Roman Period, wealthy people in Israel liked to have Roman-style objects (like this bowl) in their homes. Why do you think that is?



Artifacts: Rattle



Rattle, Israel, 800-700 BCE, clay: wheel-turned, slipped, and fired. 3 1/4 x 2 5/8 in. (8.3 x 6.7 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York Purchase: Archaeology Acquisition Fund, JM 12-73.428 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

Close Looking / Visual Analysis:

- Describe the shape and design of this object. What does it remind you of?
- Inside this hollow artifact is a loose pebble or piece of clay. What do you think it sounds like when the object is shaken?
- The hole in this rattle is too small for the pebble or piece of clay to come out. Why do you think the hole is there?
- How does the shape of the object relate to its function as a rattle?

For Further Discussion:

After giving students ample opportunity to examine this object, lead them in a discussion of related topics and themes:

- How do you think this object was used in the lives of ancient Israelites? How might the context in which it was found influence your answer?
- Some people have identified this object as a musical instrument. What function does music serve in a society? Why do you think it is that archaeologists have not found many musical instruments from ancient Israel?
- Other people believe this artifact was used for religious ceremonies. Why do you think music is often a part of religious ceremonies? What role does music play in religious observance today?
- Still others believe this object may have simply been a child's toy. How do you think ancient toys differed from the kinds of toys kids play with today? What do you think they have in common? Do you think you would have liked to have been a kid in ancient Israel? Why or why not?

About the Artifact

This hollow clay object is just over three inches high. Inside is a loose pebble or piece of clay that rattles when the object is shaken. Objects such as this have been found in numerous Iron Age sites, mainly in tombs.

An instrument that was shaken, possibly a rattle, is mentioned as being played during David's transport of the Ark to Jerusalem in the Book of Second Samuel, 6:5. This suggests that the rattle shown here might have been a musical instrument of the Iron Age. Rattles are also found in the Late Bronze Age (1550 BCE – 1200 BCE) in association with cultic installations; this has

probably led to their interpretation as cultic objects in the Iron Age. However, there is always the possibility that rattles were children's toys, just as they are today.

Further Information

Pottery

Most of the artifacts uncovered by archaeologists working in the Middle East are made of clay. Such objects include cups, bowls, plates, jugs, cooking pots, oil lamps, storage jars, and figurines. One reason pottery is so common at archeological sites is that clay was widely used in the ancient world. It is plentiful and easy to obtain from clay beds. Clay is also relatively easy to work with, and when baked in a kiln becomes strong and waterproof. It was thus a very useful material for making everyday items.

Another reason is that pottery holds up better over the centuries than many other materials. Wood and most textiles decompose, but pottery does not. Although the ancient Israelites certainly used wood for furniture, building construction, and other purposes, archaeologists rarely find wooden artifacts from ancient times. In addition, because undecorated pottery was probably inexpensive to buy, clay items were often thrown away when they were no longer needed and were not saved or recycled. These discarded artifacts are often discovered by archaeologists.

People started making pottery thousands of years ago. By the 2nd millennium BCE, the invention of the potter's wheel made the production of clay pots faster and easier. Another technological advance occurred in the Roman Period, when clay lamps began to be mass-produced in molds.

Pottery offers insight into practical aspects of the daily life of groups of people, but it also reflects their cultural identity. Different cultures produced different styles of pots and decorated them with different kinds of designs. Today, archaeologists use the different styles of pottery to trace the interactions and movements of ancient peoples.

Research Topics / Content Connections:

- Daily Life in Ancient Israel
- Pottery
- Musical Instruments



RELATED ARTIFACTS

Bull Figurine



Syria, 2000–1750 BCE, clay: hand-formed, pierced, slipped, and fired 3 3/16 x 1 7/8 x 2 7/8 in. (8.1 x 4.8 x 7.3 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York Gift of the Betty and Max Ratner Collection, 1981–156 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

This clay figurine is just a few inches high. The function of this small sculpture and others like it is not certain, but they could represent the animals often associated with Syrian or Canaanite gods. They might therefore have been used as religious offerings or symbols in shrines, homes, or elsewhere.

Discuss:

- What does this figurine look like to you?
- How do you think it was made?
- What do you think it could have been used for? Why do you say that?
- Archaeologists believe this figurine might have been associated with an ancient Syrian or Canaanite god. What other kinds of evidence might support that idea?

Horse Figurine



Israel, 1000–586 BCE, clay: hand-formed, incised, and fired 3 15/16 x 1 1/2 x 5 15/16 in. (10 x 3.8 x 15.1 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York Gift of the Betty and Max Ratner Collection, 1981–223 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

Horse figurines are among the most common animal figures found in the land of Israel during the Iron Age. They are often associated with female pillar figurines, model couches, and bird figurines, and may have been used in non-mainstream worship by Israelites. Most recently, the female pillar figurines have been tentatively identified as the pagan goddess Asherah, and the other figures found with them could be associated with her as well. But we do not know how exactly they functioned.

Discuss:

- What does this figurine look like to you?
- How do you think it was made?
- What do you think it could have been used for? Why do you say that?
- Compare this object with the Syrian bull figurine. How are the two objects similar or different? Explain the similarities.
- Archaeologists believe this figurine might have been used by Israelites for rituals that were not part of the mainstream Israelite religion. What other kinds of evidence might support that idea?



Artifacts:

Foundation Stone from the Fortification Wall of Jerusalem



Foundation Stone from the Fortification Wall of Jerusalem

Jerusalem, Israel, 41-70 CE, limestone: carved.

21 5/8 x 24 1/2 x 41 1/2 in. (54.9 x 62.2 x 105.4 cm).

The Jewish Museum, New York

Gift of Evi Bossanyi Loeb in honor of Howard S. Levy through the
National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, 1993-30

Close Looking / Visual Analysis:

- What does this object look like to you?
- How do you think the ancient Israelites used a huge block of stone like this?
- In general, what kinds of objects are made from stone? What are the characteristics of stone that make it a good material for such objects? What characteristics make it unsuited for other purposes? Why do you think it is that some of the earliest human tools were made of stone? Why don't we continue to use stone for most of our tools today? What do we use stone for today?

For Further Discussion:

After giving students ample opportunity to examine this object, lead them in a discussion of related topics and themes:

- This is a stone from a wall built around the city of Jerusalem. Why do you think people felt the need to build walls around their cities in ancient times? Are there any drawbacks to living in a walled city? Why are modern cities generally not walled? Do we have anything equivalent?
- How do you think archaeologists know that this block was once part of a city wall?
- Why do you think cities developed in ancient times? What benefits did they provide? Why do people live in cities today?
- Walled cities frequently mark the rise of governments in ancient times. Why would that be? Why don't we generally see walled cities in the archaeological record before the development of complex governments?
- Why do we have governments? What do governments provide for people?
- What is a monarchy? What are some of the positive and negative aspects of a monarchy? Why do you think some of the earliest governments were monarchies? What other types of government exist? Compare their benefits and drawbacks.

About the Artifact

City walls provided an important line of defense against invading armies. This single limestone block, weighing 750 pounds, is one of thousands that formed a massive wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem in the 1st century CE. King Agrippa I (10 BCE–44 CE) began building this wall in 41 CE, and it was completed in 66

CE, when the Jews revolted against the Romans. In 70 CE, the Roman army breached the wall and destroyed Jerusalem and the Second Temple.

Further Information

Cities and States

The rise of the monarchy in ancient Israel is marked in archaeological excavations by the sudden appearance of new city plans, including fortification walls and large city gates. Many cities also included fortresses and palatial residences. Such building projects could not have happened without the organization of a centralized government and resources collected in the form of taxes and conscripted labor. In exchange for these taxes, the government protected the people from enemy attack and maintained order in the land. The ancient Israelites faced frequent wars with their neighbors.

Research Topics / Content Connections:

- Israel in the Roman Period
- Ancient Cities
- The Rise of Governments



RELATED ARTIFACT

Slingshot



Israel, Probably 2nd millennium BCE, clay: hand-formed and baked. 2 1/16 in. (5.2 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York Purchase: Archaeology Acquisition Fund, JM 12-73.269 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

This object may look harmless, but it could be deadly. Using a leather sling, soldiers would hurl these clay balls at their adversaries. This kind of weapon—the slingshot—is familiar to us from the biblical story of David and Goliath. According to the text, when the young Israelite David faced the Philistine giant Goliath, David was armed only with his sling and five smooth stones. But a carefully aimed shot was enough to fell the mighty Philistine warrior. Israel won the war, and David went on to become king.

Discuss:

- What could this small clay ball have been used for in ancient times?
- This is a slingshot. Warriors would hurl them at their enemies using leather slings. How do you think archaeologists figured this out?
- Do these archaeological finds change the way you understand the biblical story of David and Goliath? How?



Artifacts: Double Offering Bowl



Double Offering Bowl, Syria or Turkey, early 2nd millennium BCE, basalt: ground.
9 x 8 in. (22.9 x 20.3 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York Gift of A. A. Rosen, 1981-
313 Digital image © 2006 The Jewish Museum, New York Photo by Ardon Bar Hama

Close Looking / Visual Analysis:

- Describe this object and the image on the front of the object. What does it look like to you? What do you think it could represent?
 - What other designs are there on the object?
 - Describe the texture of this object. What material do you think it is made of? What kinds of tools might have been used to make it?
-

For Further Discussion:

After giving students ample opportunity to examine this object, lead them in a discussion of related topics and themes:

- How might you use this object? How do you think it might have been used in ancient times?
 - Archaeologists believe that ancient Syrians or Hittites might have used this object to make offerings to their gods. How does this information influence your interpretation of the image?
 - The image appears to show a god standing on two snakes. What kind of god do you think this might be? Why? On another side of the object is a god standing on a lion. What kind of god might that be?
-

About the Artifact

The Israelites were not the only people living in and around the land of Israel in ancient times. There were Syrians, Hittites, Canaanites, and others who lived nearby and had distinct cultures and beliefs. These people were mainly polytheistic—worshipping multiple gods.

The two bowls making up this piece were intended for the worship of two different Syrian or Hittite gods. When the smaller bowl is on top, as in this picture, one of the vertical supports shows the image of a god standing on snakes (probably a weather god) turned right-side up. Another support has a representation of a god standing on a lion. When the larger bowl is on top, that image is turned right-side up. Worshippers may have placed small offerings to the gods in the bowls.

Although the ancient Israelites did not officially worship multiple gods, some people were influenced by the religious practices of their neighbors. And the Israelites did make offerings to their god at local shrines and later at the Temple in Jerusalem. This object represents the polytheistic faiths and the manner of worship out of which Israelite monotheism arose and was practiced.

Further Information

Religion In Ancient Israel

Religion, nationality, and identity were closely linked in the ancient Near East. In Iron Age Israel, being Israelite meant living in the land of Israel, sharing a common heritage, and participating in Israelite rituals. Jerusalem was the center of religious and national identity—first for the united kingdom and later for the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Priests offered sacrifices to their god in the Jerusalem Temple on behalf of the people. Worship of other gods was officially prohibited, but individuals were often influenced by other cultures and beliefs—at times borrowing images and symbols from neighboring groups. After the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE, synagogues became local centers for Jewish life, and worship shifted from sacrifice to prayer, study, and public reading of the Torah.

Research Topics / Content Connections:

- Monotheism and Polytheism
- Cultural Interaction
- Ancient Religious Practice



Themes

Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Explore how these works of art relate to the theme of daily life in ancient Israel.

Storage Jar

Probably North Africa, 1st century BCE-2nd century CE

Lamp

Israel, 800-586 BCE

Shipping Jug

Probably Italy, 1st-2nd century CE

Rattle

Israel, 800-700 BCE

Double Offering Bowl

Syria or Turkey, early 2nd millennium BCE

Ancient Cities and States

Explore how these works of art relate to the theme of ancient cities and states.

Stamped Jar Handle

Israel, late 8th century BCE

Foundation Stone from the Fortification Wall of Jerusalem

Jerusalem, Israel, 41-70 CE

Trade in the Ancient World

Explore how these works of art relate to the theme of trade in the ancient world.

Storage Jar

Probably North Africa, 1st century BCE-2nd century CE

Coin

Rome, Italy, 71 CE

Shipping Jug

Probably Italy, 1st-2nd century CE

Pottery

Explore how these works of art relate to the theme of the Lower East Side.

Storage Jar

Probably North Africa, 1st century BCE-2nd century CE

Stamped Jar Handle

Israel, late 8th century BCE

Lamp

Israel, 800-586 BCE

Rattle

Israel, 800-700 BCE



Timeline of Ancient Israel

c. 1200 BCE

Israelites settle in Canaan.

c. 1020 BCE

Saul anointed first king of Israel.

c. 1000–961 BCE

King David rules over a united Israel.

c. 965 BCE

King Solomon begins building the First Temple in Jerusalem.

c. 922 BCE

The united Israelite kingdom splits in two—the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

722 BCE

Sargon II of Assyria conquers the Northern Kingdom and exiles many of the inhabitants.

586 BCE

Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylonia conquers Judah, destroys the Temple, and exiles thousands to Babylon.

538 BCE

King Cyrus of Persia conquers Babylonia and allows Jews to return to the land of Israel (though many choose to remain in Babylonia).

c. 516 BCE

The Second Temple is built in Jerusalem.

332 BCE

Alexander the Great conquers the Persian Empire, including the land of Israel. Early Jewish prayer houses are documented in the Diaspora.

c. 167 BCE

The Maccabean revolt against the Syrian Greeks achieves relative independence for the Jews. The holiday of Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Temple.

63 BCE

The Roman Empire controls the land of Israel; the area called Judea (including Jerusalem) becomes a client kingdom of Rome.

37 BCE

King Herod of Judea refurbishes the Second Temple.

6 CE

Rome annexes Judea.

66 CE

The first Jewish revolt against Rome begins.

68 CE

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai receives permission from Roman authorities to establish a rabbinical academy in the coastal city of Yavneh. This helps set the stage for the emergence of modern rabbinic Judaism.

70 CE

The Romans destroy Jerusalem and the Second Temple.

132–135 CE

Shimon bar-Kokhba leads the second Jewish revolt against Rome. Roman Emperor Hadrian eventually crushes the rebellion and expels the Jews from Jerusalem.

c. 210 CE

Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi edits the Mishnah.

c. 400 CE

The Palestinian Talmud is completed.

c. 499 CE

The Babylonian Talmud is completed.

Note: Scholars disagree on the exact dates of some events in Israel's ancient history. The dates in this chronology are drawn from the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, CD-ROM, version 1.0. (Jerusalem: Judaica Multimedia, 1997) and *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: The Israel Excavation Society & Carta, 1993).



Glossary

Absolute dating

A collective term for techniques that assign specific dates or date ranges, in calendar years, to artifacts and other archaeological finds. Dates can be determined in a variety of ways—for example, by correlation with historically documented events or objects, through tree-ring dating, or by radiocarbon dating.

Altar

An elevated place or structure before which religious ceremonies may be enacted or on which sacrifices may be offered.

Ancient

Relating to times long past, especially those of the historical period before the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476 CE).

Archaeology

The systematic recovery and examination of material evidence, such as graves, buildings, tools, and pottery, remaining from past human life and culture.

Artifact

An object made or modified by human beings.

Babylonian Talmud

A compilation of discussions on Jewish law and practice carried out in the rabbinical academies of Babylonia between the 3rd and 6th centuries CE. Edited around the early 6th century, the Babylonian Talmud remains a fundamental determinant of Jewish law and is widely studied today. It is essentially an interpretation and expansion of an earlier code of Jewish law, known as the Mishnah, which was edited in the early 3rd century.

Before the Common Era (BCE)

BCE is equivalent to BC (“Before Christ”) but is preferred in many non-Christian contexts because it does not carry a religious meaning.

Common Era (CE)

CE is equivalent to AD (Anno Domini, “In the year of our Lord”) but is preferred in many non-Christian contexts because it does not carry a religious meaning.

Conservation

The process of preserving, repairing, cleaning, and restoring artifacts.

Culture

The arts, beliefs, institutions, and other products of human work and thought expressed in a particular community or by a particular group.

Data

Facts or figures that an archaeologist uses to formulate conclusions.

Dead Sea Scrolls

A collection of more than 900 manuscripts discovered in caves near the Dead Sea between 1947 and 1956. The documents, which were written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic between the 3rd century BCE and the 1st century CE, comprise many different types, including the oldest known biblical texts.

Diaspora

The body of Jews or Jewish communities settled outside Palestine or modern Israel.

Ecofact

A naturally produced object found on an archaeological site, such as seeds, animal bones, and soil, that provides information about past environments.

Excavation

The process of digging out or uncovering something.

Feature

An element of an archaeological site that (unlike an artifact) cannot be moved, such as a wall, post hole, fire pit, or floor.

Fertile Crescent

A historical region in the Middle East that is watered by the Nile, Jordan, Euphrates, and Tigris rivers. While having an impressive record of past human activity, it is most famous for its sites related to the origins of agriculture. It covers some 400 to 500 square kilometers, an area that corresponds to present-day Egypt, Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Lebanon and parts of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, southeastern Turkey, and southwestern Iran.

Grid

In an archaeological context, a grid is a series of large squares superimposed on a site by an archaeologist to organize an excavation.

Historian

A writer and recorder of history.

Hypothesis (pl. hypotheses)

An educated guess; in an archaeological context, a hypothesis is an inference that an archaeologist tries to confirm or disprove through further evidence.

Inference

The act or process of deriving a conclusion from facts or premises.

In situ

Archaeological remains found in situ are found in almost the exact same position as they were originally left.



Lamelekh

A Hebrew inscription found on ancient seals that means “belonging to the king.”

“Land of Israel

The area encompassed by the modern State of Israel has had many names over the centuries—including Judah, Judea, Palestine, and Israel—but for the sake of clarity is, throughout this website, referred to as the “land of Israel.”

Mishnah

A compilation of rabbinic interpretations of Jewish law.

Mosaic

A picture or design made by fitting together pieces of colored glass, stone, or tile.

Pagan

A person or community that follows a polytheistic religion, such as the ancient Romans or Greeks.

Paleontologist

A scientist who studies life forms from prehistoric and geologic periods, mainly by examining fossils.

Palestinian Talmud

A compilation of discussions on Jewish law and practice from the rabbinical academies of the land of Israel. Edited in the 4th century CE, the Palestinian Talmud is less commonly studied than the Babylonian version, which was finalized more than a hundred years later.

Papyrus

A reed found in the Mediterranean region, especially Egypt, that was used to make a kind of paper. It is also the name of the paper and the documents written on it.

Potsherd

A fragment of pottery. Also called a “shard” or “sherd.”

Pottery

Pots, bowls, or dishes that are made of clay and hardened by heat.

Relative dating

A general method of dating objects and layers of occupation in relation to other artifacts and strata. For example, archaeologists can often organize the layers or objects at a site in order from oldest to most recent according to the depth at which they are buried.

Sacrifice

The act of offering something to a deity in appeasement or homage, especially the ritual slaughter of an animal.

Screen

A sieve used to separate artifacts and ecofacts from fine particles, such as sand or gravel.

Seal

A signet or die with a raised or incised emblem used to stamp an impression on a soft substance, such as wax, lead, or clay.

Seriation

A relative-dating technique based on the chronological ordering of a group of artifacts or assemblages, where the most similar are placed adjacent to each other in the series.

Shekel

The standard unit of weight in ancient Israel, equal to about a quarter of an ounce..

Site

A place where human activity occurred and material remains were left behind. Archaeologists excavate sites to learn about the people who lived there.

Strata

Horizontal layers of earth that show different time periods.

Stratigraphy

See strata.

Survey

The systematic examination of the ground surface for the purpose of locating archaeological sites.

Synagogue

A Jewish house of prayer.

Tel

A large mound or hill that contains the layered remains of ancient occupations.

Terrace farming

Farming on earthen terraces created on hillsides. These terraces resemble giant steps down the slope.

Torah

Torah literally means “teaching,” but the word usually refers to the first five books of the Bible or a hand-written scroll containing the Hebrew text of those books.

Trowel

A tool with a pointed end used for loosening soil by scraping.

Note: Many of these definitions are drawn from the *Riverside Webster’s II New College Dictionary* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995).



Resources

Books for Educators

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Further Resources

Dig: The Archaeology Magazine for Kids
<http://www.digonsite.com>

Archaeology Magazine, a publication of the Archaeological Institute of America
<http://www.archaeology.org>

Canaan and Ancient Israel at the University of Pennsylvania Museum
<http://www.museum.upenn.edu/Canaan/index.html>

Society for American Archaeology
<http://www.saa.org>

The Jerusalem Mosaic
<http://jeru.huji.ac.il/>

Archaeological Institute of America
<http://www.archaeological.org>

American Museum of Natural History: Ology
<http://ology.amnh.org/archaeology/>

The Jewish Virtual Library: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/jewhist.html>



Activities

Observation and Inference

Aim: To practice making careful observations and drawing inferences based on these observations.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12

Themes: Pottery, Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Rattle*, Israel, 800–700 BCE; *Lamp*, Israel, 800–586 BCE; *Double Offering Bowl*, Syria or Turkey, early 2nd millennium BCE

Discipline: Science

Materials: Photos of ancient artifacts or several small objects for students to study, paper, and pencil

Procedure:

Archaeologists study artifacts and draw inferences about the past based on their observations. Through observation and inference, they develop working hypotheses to explain how people once lived. Observation and inference are important skills for your students to practice.

1. Begin by asking students what someone might be able to learn about them from their shoes, glasses, watch, or other personal items. Be prepared to challenge students' inferences. For example, ask, "What do you see that makes you say that?" or "Are there any other conclusions you could draw?"
2. After discussing what can (and cannot) be learned from an object, introduce the terms "artifact," "observation," and "inference." Explain that archaeologists draw inferences based on observations of artifacts. Stress the distinction between an observation and an inference.
3. Divide students into small groups and give each group an image or object to examine. Use the rattle, Israelite bull figurine, double offering bowl, or oil lamp, or find other objects that are unfamiliar to students, such as foreign coins, outdated bits of technology, etc.

4. Have each group make a list of observations and a list of inferences about their object. Students can also sketch the object.
5. Ask each team to choose one inference as their hypothesis and explain how they might test it. Have the groups to share their ideas with the class.

Extension:

The book *Motel of the Mysteries* (1979) by David Macaulay takes a humorous look at archaeological interpretation. In Macaulay's account, archaeologists in the distant future excavate a seedy 20th-century motel and draw some surprising conclusions about the ceremonial rituals practiced in this "ancient burial ground." Macaulay's book offers an opportunity to explore the challenges and limitations of archaeological research. You might ask students to read this short book and discuss or write about their reactions. For example, what is Macaulay suggesting about our interpretations of the ancient past? What might he be saying about the process of archaeology? Do you agree? How else could the book's protagonist, Howard Carson, have interpreted some of his finds (other than the obvious ways)?

One of the sources for Macaulay's satire is the work of real-life archaeologist Howard Carter. In 1922, Carter uncovered the tomb of the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamen (reign 1334–1325 BCE). You might ask students to read excerpts from Carter's *The Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamen* (1977), a book in which he describes his discovery.



The Importance of Context

Aim: To make inferences about an object based on its context.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12

Themes: Pottery, Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Shipping Jug*, probably Italy, 1st-2nd century CE;

Rattle, Israel, 800-700 BCE; *Lamp*, 800-586 BCE

Discipline: Social Studies, English Language Arts

Materials: Paper, pencil, and cup or bowl.

Procedure:

Archaeologists are very careful to consider the context in which they find an artifact. Where an object is found and what is found with it can often reveal a lot more than the object can alone. For example, an oil lamp or rattle will be interpreted differently if found in a child's room or on a temple altar.

1. Have students examine the Iron Age oil lamp or Israelite rattle. Discuss the different contexts in which these items might be used and the different ways they might be interpreted by archaeologists.
2. Bring in a simple cup and ask students to imagine that the object was found in a dig.
3. Working individually or in small groups, students should list as many plausible uses for the object as they can.
4. Give students a little more information about the context in which the object was "found": Tell some students that archaeologists discovered the object in a tomb with several skeletons, jewelry, and other cups and bottles. Tell another group of students that the object was found in a simple dwelling next to a bed frame and a plate. Tell a third group it was found in a room with many shelves filled with hundreds of cups, bowls, and plates of different sizes and designs.
5. Ask students to write short narratives imagining how and by whom the object was used. Was the item part of a religious ceremony? Was it used on a daily basis? Was it a prized possession? What additional information would help you understand how this object was used?
6. Afterward, invite all the groups to share their ideas. How did the context influence their interpretations?

Time of Your Life

Aim: To grasp the concept of periodization by creating personalized timelines.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8

Themes: Ancient Cities and States, Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Lamp*, Israel, second half 3rd-5th century CE;

Lamp, Israel, 800-586 BCE

Discipline: Social Studies, English Language Arts

Materials: Paper, pencil, markers, or crayons

Procedure:

Archaeologists divide the past into different ages or periods. In ancient Israel, for example, the period from 1200 to 586 BCE is known as the Iron Age because iron tools were widely used at that time. The Iron Age was followed by the Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods, named after the successive conquerors of the region. Such divisions are to some extent arbitrary constructs, but they help archaeologists describe and define the events, social conditions, and cultural milieus of the past.

The oil lamps shown below represent two different periods in ancient Israel.

1. Have students examine the oil lamps and discuss the differences between them.
2. Ask students to put the lamps in order from oldest to newest and explain their reasoning.
3. Introduce the concept of periodization. Why do you think historians and archaeologists like to break time down into periods?
4. Ask each of your students to create a timeline of his or her own life, dividing the past into different ages or periods. On what will he or she base the divisions? What names will be used for the different periods?
5. Students can illustrate their timelines as appropriate.



Doing the Dig

Aim: To simulate an archaeological dig.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12

Themes: Pottery, Ancient Cities & States, Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Storage Jar*, probably North Africa, 1st century BCE–2nd century CE; *Stamped Jar Handle*, Israel, late 8th century BCE; *Shipping Jug*, probably Italy, 1st–2nd century CE; *Rattle*, Israel, 800–700 BCE; *Mortar and Grinder*, Israel, 1400–586 BCE; *Lamp*, Israel, 800–586 BCE; *Judaea Capta Coin of Vespasian*, Rome, Italy, 71 CE; *Foundation Stone*, Jerusalem, Israel, 41–70 CE; *Double Offering Bowl*, Syria or Turkey, early 2nd millennium BCE

Discipline: Science

Materials: The specific materials will depend on the scope of your excavation project.

Procedure:

A simulated dig can be a powerful learning experience for students of any age, and there are many ways to simulate an archaeological excavation. The depth and scope of the project will depend on your resources, time, and logistical constraints. Options range from full-scale excavations on school-owned land over the course of several weeks to shoebox digs that take just an hour to complete. Many ideas for dig projects can be found in the books and websites. Regardless of the methods chosen, several key concepts should be kept in mind if you decide to engage your students in a simulated dig.

Whether your dig is taking place in the ground, in a sandbox, or in a shoebox, the digging should be carried out in a deliberate and methodical manner. One important distinction between archaeological excavation and treasure-hunting is the care and restraint with which the archaeologist digs.

While digging is necessary (and often fun), much of the real learning takes place after the excavation is completed. The observation, analysis, interpretation, and dating of artifacts and strata should be a primary focus of the activity.

A dig is a good opportunity to teach your students about stratigraphy and relative dating. Give careful thought to how and where you plant your artifacts in order to create the clearest simulation of stratigraphic distribution. Students should not be too concerned about who finds the most important artifact. Archaeology is about piecing together a picture of the past based on all the evidence. Every artifact can contribute to our understanding. Sometimes the simplest objects offer the most salient clues.

Time Capsule

Aim: To create a representative portrait of contemporary culture by choosing appropriate objects to include in a time capsule.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12

Themes: Ancient Cities and States, Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Storage Jar*, probably North Africa, 1st century BCE–2nd century CE; *Stamped Jar Handle*, Israel, late 8th century BCE; *Shipping Jug*, probably Italy, 1st–2nd century CE; *Rattle*, Israel, 800–700 BCE; *Mortar and Grinder*, Israel, 1400–586 BCE; *Lamp*, Israel, 800–586 BCE; *Judaea Capta Coin of Vespasian*, Rome, Italy, 71 CE; *Foundation Stone*, Jerusalem, Israel, 41–70 CE; *Double Offering Bowl*, Syria or Turkey, early 2nd millennium BCE

Discipline: Social Studies

Materials: A container for the time capsule, time capsule objects (brought in by students), and shovels

Procedure:

Archaeologists of the future will study objects from the present to learn about our lives and culture. Your students can help them by creating a time capsule to be discovered by future investigators. The time capsule can be buried on property owned by the school or at another location.

In deciding what to bury in their time capsule, students should consider some of the following questions:

- What do you want future generations to know about you?
- Which objects would best reflect what you want people to know about your culture?
- Do you think people could misinterpret any of these objects? Why or why not?
- Which objects do you think will be most likely to survive intact? Which do you think will be least likely to survive?
- Do the objects you have chosen to include create an accurate picture of life in this time and place?



Terrace Farming

Aim: To demonstrate the benefits of terrace farming through scientific experimentation.

Grades: 3-5, 6-8

Themes: Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Mortar and Grinder*, Israel, 1400-586 BCE

Discipline: Science

Materials: Seeds and soil for planting, and plastic bins or containers for the soil

Procedure:

The ancient Israelites farmed on hillsides, which was not an easy thing to do. To make this task easier, they created terraces that were like giant steps down the slope. First they would build a wall around the hillside; then they would throw dirt and rubble behind the wall to create a strip of level ground. This process was repeated many times as they moved up the hill. The terraces not only provided a flat surface for planting but also helped capture precious rainwater. When rain hit unterraced hillsides, the water would quickly wash away, often taking some of the soil with it.

1. Your students can experiment with terrace farming. Have them plant some seeds in a rounded mound of soil and some in a terraced mound.
2. Students can track the progress of each set of seeds as they grow and compare the results. Which seeds grew better? Why do they think that is?

A Child in Ancient Times

Aim: To produce a work of creative writing that reflects an understanding of the daily life of a child in ancient Israel.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8

Themes: Ancient Cities and States, Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Rattle*, Israel, 800-700 BCE; *Mortar and Grinder*, Israel, 1400-586 BCE; *Judaea Capta Coin of Vespasian*, Rome, Italy, 71 CE

Discipline: Jewish Studies, Social Studies, English Language Arts

Materials: Paper and pencil

Procedure:

1. Ask students to imagine they live in ancient Israel and are writing to friends who live in another town.
2. In their letters, students should describe their daily lives and activities as Israelite children.
3. Encourage students to incorporate into their narratives the artifacts they have examined (such as the oil lamps, rattle, coins, bangles, mortar and grinder, etc.)



Technological Innovation

Aim: To consider the historical significance of specific technological innovations.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12

Themes: Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Lamp*, Israel, second half 3rd-5th century CE; *Lamp*, Israel, 800-586 BCE

Discipline: Science, Social Studies

Materials: Library or Internet for student research

Procedure:

People have always used technology to enhance their lives and help fulfill their basic needs. Although they might seem primitive to us, ancient people made technological advancements that were just as important and revolutionary as the cars and computers we use today.

1. The oil lamp is one example of ancient technology. Have students look at the oil lamps pictured below and discuss the technological advances that are reflected in each.
2. Encourage students to consider which features they would most want in an oil lamp—for example, stability, portability, the capacity to hold large amounts of oil, etc.
3. Brainstorm a list of important inventions from different periods of history. Which do students think have been the most important inventions? Why?
4. Students can conduct further research on one invention that they think was especially important. When was this invention introduced? By whom? How did this invention change the way people lived? What is the legacy of this particular technological advancement?

Making a Lamp

Aim: To create an artifact similar to those used in ancient Israel.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8

Themes: Pottery, Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Lamp*, Israel, second half 3rd-5th century CE; *Lamp*, Israel, 800-586 BCE

Discipline: Visual Art, Social Studies

Materials: Clay

Procedure:

After they examine some of the oil lamps from The Jewish Museum's online collection below, have students create their own lamps out of clay.

1. Give each student a small amount of clay. Encourage students to work the clay in their hands and get a feel for the material before making anything.
2. Then have students create their own lamps, based on the ancient designs they have seen, as well as their own ideas. Students can start by creating a pinch pot or a coiled pot. Both are centuries-old techniques for crafting clay vessels. For a pinch pot, insert the thumb into a ball of clay, and gently squeeze the clay between thumb and fingers while rotating the ball in the palm of the other hand. For a coiled pot, roll the clay into long, thin strips, and wind the strips around to build up the walls of the pot. Then smooth the clay with the fingers. Students can then turn their pots into oil lamps by pinching a spout or folding the clay over the top.
3. Afterward, ask students to share and describe their work. Remind them that unless their artifacts are baked in a pottery kiln, they should not put oil (or other liquids) in them.



Weighing the Options

Aim: To create a simple balance and develop a system of standardized weights.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8

Themes: Trade in the Ancient World, Ancient Cities and States

Artworks: *Bangle*, 1000-586 BCE; *Judaea Capta Coin of Vespasian*, Rome, Italy, 71 CE

Discipline: Science, Social Studies

Materials: Wooden dowels, paper cups, string, and tape; pencils, paper clips, and other small classroom items

Procedure:

Before the advent of coinage, ancient merchants used simple balances and weights to make sure they were getting the proper amount of gold, silver, or bronze in exchange for their goods.

1. Have students examine the bronze bangle below and discuss how it could have been used as currency.
2. Then discuss the importance of the merchant's scale in ancient times. Why would standardized weights and accurate measurements have been so crucial?
3. Have students make their own balances using a dowel, two cups, and some string.
4. After they have constructed their scales, students can experiment by weighing different objects in the classroom—paperclips, pencils, a sheet of paper, etc. Which weighs the most? The least? How many paper clips are equal to the weight of a pencil or an eraser?
5. Have students create a standardized weight system based on paperclips or some other item. What issues must they consider in developing a standard weight?

Making Money

Aim: To design a coin with personally meaningful imagery.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8

Themes: Trade in the Ancient World, Ancient Cities and States

Artworks: *Judaea Capta Coin of Vespasian*, Rome, Italy, 71 CE

Discipline: Visual Art, Social Studies

Materials: Pencils or markers; copies of the coin template

Procedure:

Ancient and modern coins reflect a wide range of imagery and ideology. Their designs express nationalistic, religious, and artistic themes.

1. Have your students examine some coins (such as the Judaea Capta coin, modern U.S. coins, or coins from other countries) and discuss the imagery they see. What kinds of images are featured on the coins? What similarities and differences are there among the coins? What ideas are expressed through the images?
2. Give students an opportunity to design their own coins. You can use the coin template included here. The template features two circles so students can represent both sides of their coins.
3. Have students share their work and discuss their ideas with the class.



World Trade

Aim: To examine current patterns of trade and consider their significance.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8

Themes: Trade in the Ancient World, Ancient Cities and States

Artworks: *Storage Jar*, probably North Africa, 1st century BCE–2nd century CE; *Shipping Jug*, probably Italy, 1st–2nd century CE

Discipline: Social Studies

Materials: World map, paper, and pencil

Procedure:

1. Have students examine the storage jar and shipping bottle. Discuss the role these objects played in ancient trade and the importance of trade in the ancient world.
2. Remind students that trade remains crucial to our society. Now more than ever, everyday and luxury items are imported and exported all over the world. Often we do not even consider the origins of the products we use. Ask students to investigate the origins of items in their homes—their games, electronic equipment, clothes, cars, etc.
3. Have students share what they discover, and plot the results on a large world map. You might also ask them to create graphs showing how the sources of various products are distributed.
4. Discuss the following:
 - What do the results say about our world today?
 - Are there any locations that seem to export a lot of items or particular kinds of things? Why might that be?
 - How have all these items gotten here? How might the map of imports have changed over time?

Picking up the Pieces

Aim: To simulate the work of an archaeologist by reassembling a broken pot.

Grades: K-2, 3-5

Themes: Pottery

Artworks: *Stamped Jar Handle*, Israel, late 8th century BCE

Discipline: Math

Materials:

For option 1: Several flowerpots, a hammer, and glue

For option 2: Drawing of an ancient pot, glue, scissors, and construction paper; markers, crayons, or pencils

Procedure:

The remains of the past seldom survive intact. Archaeologists frequently have to reassemble an artifact like a jigsaw puzzle. Many times, they do not even have all the pieces. There are two options for this activity.

Option 1:

1. Before class begins, break several inexpensive flowerpots by placing each in a bag and smashing it with a hammer. Keep all the pieces and check to make sure they are not too sharp.
2. Give each student or group of students all the pieces from one of the flowerpots and have them try to glue them back together.
3. For older students, you might want to give them only some of the pieces and have them estimate the shape and dimensions of the pot based on the evidence they have.
4. Afterward, ask students to guess the function of the artifact.

Option 2:

1. Print out the drawing of a pot, which you'll find here.
2. Make copies and have students decorate the pots with markers, crayons, or colored pencils.
3. Then have students cut out the pieces, reassemble the pots, and glue them onto construction paper.



Seals

Aim: To create a personal seal out of clay or Styrofoam.

Grades: K-2, 3-5

Themes: Pottery, Ancient Cities and States

Artworks: *Stamped Jar Handle*, Israel, late 8th century BCE

Discipline: Visual Art, English Language Arts

Materials: Clay or Styrofoam; pencils

Procedure:

1. Have students examine the lamelekh stamped jar handles below and pay particular attention to the designs.
2. Explain how the designs on the lamelekh jar handles reflect the impressions of royal stamps, and discuss the way seals work. (Clay or stone seals were incised with words and pictures; when pressed into the soft clay of a jar handle, they made an identifying mark. Stamps were also pressed onto clay balls that sealed official documents written on papyrus. One had to break the seal in order to read the document.) Click here to watch a video that explains more about these seals.
3. Discuss the purpose of royal seals. For example, do we use anything similar today? Does our government employ any signs or symbols to mark official documents? Why? Do individuals use anything to mark their own possessions or territory? What do we use?
4. Encourage students to think about the kinds of symbols they would use to represent themselves.
5. Have students make their own seals out of clay or by using a pencil to incise Styrofoam. Students can use both words and pictures in their designs, but they should remember that any words will be reversed when the stamp is used.

Write On

Aim: To examine the development of the alphabet.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8

Themes: Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Stamped Jar Handle*, Israel, late 8th century BCE

Discipline: Social Studies, English Language Arts

Materials: Samples of different alphabets, paper, and pencil

Procedure:

1. Show students the lamelekh stamps below and discuss the development of writing. Why was writing introduced? What purposes did it serve? Why do you think writing developed along with governments and complex societies? How would our lives be different if we had no way to write things down?
2. Have students examine the different alphabets shown here and compare the early Hebrew alphabet to the late Hebrew alphabet and to the Greek and Latin alphabets. How did the letters change over time? What similarities to ancient Hebrew and other early alphabets remain?
3. Have students send messages to each other using the different alphabets or have students create new writing systems of their own.



Cultural Expression

Aim: To reflect on cultural affiliation and expression.

Grades: 9-12

Themes: Ancient Cities and States, Daily Life in Ancient Israel

Artworks: *Double Offering Bowl*, Syria or Turkey, early 2nd millennium BCE

Discipline: Jewish Studies, Social Studies, English Language Arts

Materials: Paper and pencil

Procedure:

Ancient peoples expressed their cultural identity through art, symbols, and distinctive practices. Groups of people do the same thing today.

1. Have students examine the double offering bowl below.
2. Discuss how it reflects the distinctive cultural identity of the group that made and/or used it. The double offering bowl reflects the distinctive religious practices of its makers through both its form and imagery.
3. Ask students to consider cultural groups in their own communities.
 - How are these groups defined? Through religion, ethnicity, nationality, common values?
 - How do people express their membership in this group?
 - Is membership in the group an important part of the person's identity? Why or why not?
 - Does this cultural affiliation create any conflicts or tension? How?
 - Can someone belong to more than one cultural group? Is that ever a problem?
4. Encourage students to respond to these questions in writing or discuss them in small groups.

City Planning

Aim: To consider the needs of a community and the way they are met through city planning.

Grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8

Themes: Ancient Cities and States

Artworks: *Foundation Stone from the Fortification Wall of Jerusalem*, Jerusalem, Israel, 41-70 CE

Discipline: Visual Art, Math, Social Studies

Materials: Posterboard, pencils, markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Procedure:

Stone walls provided protection for the people who lived in ancient cities. Although most modern cities are not walled, their residents are protected in other ways. Both ancient and modern cities feature institutions, buildings, and architectural elements that enable the community to function effectively (schools, markets, government offices, houses of worship, orphanages, prisons, public plazas, etc.).

1. Have students examine the foundation stone (below) from Jerusalem and discuss:
 - How did this object serve the needs of the community that used it?
 - What other needs do you think the community might have had?
 - What similar (or different) needs does your community have? How are they met? Who is responsible for meeting them?
 - How does the architecture and layout of your city or community help to meet these needs?
2. Divide the class into small groups and have each group plan a new community. What are the needs of the community? How will they be met? Each group should translate its ideas and discussions into a city plan showing where the various institutions and public buildings will be. Students should give careful thought to the locations and physical relationships among the elements.
3. Students can decorate and illustrate their city plans.
4. Have each group present its work to the rest of the class.



70 CE

Aim: To compare the information provided by archaeological finds and ancient historical writings. Grades: 9-12

Themes: Ancient Cities and States

Artworks: *Judaea Capta Coin of Vespasian*, Rome, Italy, 71 CE; *Foundation Stone from the Fortification Wall of Jerusalem*, Jerusalem, Israel, 41-70 CE

Discipline: Jewish Studies, Social Studies

Materials: Text from the ancient historian Josephus

Procedure:

The year 70 CE was pivotal in the history of the Jewish people. The Romans crushed the Jewish rebellion and destroyed the Temple. Archaeology provides some important insights into the events of this period. For example, the foundation stone (below) from Jerusalem reflects the preparations the Jewish rebels made for the war with Rome. *Judaea Capta* coins (below), showing a weeping Jewess and the face of the emperor, offer a perspective on the Roman attitude after their victory. Our knowledge of the historical events, however, derives not only from archaeology, but also from historical writings produced during and shortly after that time. It is not uncommon for the fields of history and archaeology to complement each other in our understanding of the past.

The Jewish-turned-Roman historian Josephus (37-100 CE) wrote about the Jewish war with Rome and the destruction of the Temple. Excerpts from Josephus's book *The Jewish War*, in which he describes the burning of the Temple sanctuary, can be found here.

1. Have students examine the foundation stone and the *Judaea Capta* coin and discuss what these archaeological finds tell us about the time period.
2. Next have your students read the description by Josephus.
3. Discuss Josephus's text:
 - According to Josephus, what were the circumstances surrounding the burning of the Temple sanctuary? Who does Josephus blame for the burning of the sanctuary? Why?
 - What kind of picture does Josephus paint of the aftermath of the burning?
 - Josephus grew up in a prominent Jewish family in Jerusalem. He participated in the first revolt against Rome as a general but by the end of the war had gone over to the Roman side. He ended up living in Rome under the emperor's protection

until his death, although he always remained, in his own eyes, a loyal Jew. Do you see any evidence of Josephus's complex personal history in his description of these events? How might his account have been different if he had remained allied with the Jewish rebels? What if he were a Roman soldier?

4. Then discuss the text in relation to the archaeological evidence students looked at earlier:
 - What kinds of information do we get from the written history versus the archaeology?
 - What are some of the problems with relying solely on archaeology for our understanding of the past? What are the problems with relying only on historical writings?
 - Do you think one is more reliable than the other? Why or why not?

