

A Stewardship Poster

Code: EL1: SC, VA

Adapted from:

*Project Archaeology:
Saving Traditions (P.A.S.T.)*
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Overview:

Stewardship is the act of guarding and protecting the property of another. Archaeological stewardship allows people to demonstrate their respect for past cultures through the protection of historic trails and archaeological sites. Fostering this stewardship ethic in your students is the goal of the stewardship poster. As students demonstrate their application of the five steps of stewardship, they set into motion an ethical practice.

Skills: observation, model building

Evaluation Strategies: demonstration, individual project, problem solving activity

Time: three 30-minute sessions

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Observe the natural phenomena of earth layers building one on top of another.
2. Reconstruct the layering of an archaeological site demonstrating ways that the site might be protected.
3. Problem solve ways to become a steward.

Materials:

Large construction paper for each student, three colors of small construction paper for each student, markers, paste, glue, scissors

Vocabulary:

Archaeological site: a place where human activity occurred and their material remains were left.

Archaeology: a method for studying past human cultures and analyzing material evidence (artifacts and sites).

Stewardship: a guardian of another person's property.

Strata (stratum): layers of earth (one layer).

Stratigraphy: the arrangement of layers of earth representing different geologic events.

Background:

Natural and human-made (archaeological) materials settle on the earth in layers. The oldest is at the bottom and the youngest is at the top. This natural phenomenon is known as the "Law of Superposition". These layers help archaeologists relate artifacts to each other in both time and space. However, if these layers are disturbed and the materials are mixed, it is impossible to know which artifacts are from what layer, and therefore, what relationships might have existed. When vandals dig into a site to collect artifacts, they not only take an object from the cultural context, but they destroy a portion of the entire site. In short, they destroy information that can never be replaced.

Setting the stage:

If you are able to locate an exposed bank of earth near your school, which shows strata, plan a field trip so that students have first hand experience. A construction project, a riverbank, an ocean bank, or an exposed area along a road generally exposes layers of earth. If no location is available, use pictures from geology books to demonstrate stratigraphy. A local Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Tribal or University archaeologist may also be available to come talk to the class.

Activity 1.

1. Discuss your student's previous knowledge about strata and how it builds up.
2. Summarize their knowledge by drawing strata on the overhead or board, adding to it archaeological materials (artifacts) in each of the stratum. Apply the "Law of Superposition".

Activity 2.

1. Hand out the large sheets of construction paper for the background of the poster and the smaller sheets of construction paper, which are different colors. These will be used for different stratum.

2. If the width of the larger paper matches the length of the smaller paper, the students can tear the smallest paper lengthwise to form fluctuating layers of earth.
3. Have the students draw artifacts on separate sheets of paper and paste them onto the appropriate layers.

Activity 3.

1. Select one of the students' finished posters and privately ask permission to cut into this "site" to demonstrate how archaeological sites are destroyed. (Use your own poster if needed).
2. In a demonstration, cut into the strata, "digging" up artifact(s). Cut out chunks of earth as you "dig" down.
3. Discuss with students what has happened to the artifact(s), the strata, and the site.
4. Problem solve ways in which everyone can help to protect and guard archaeological sites. (Use the five steps of stewardship as a guide).
5. Have the students make a poster with their "sites" demonstrating ways they could be stewards. Students with destroyed sites can make a poster showing how sites are destroyed.