

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE *of* AMERICA

Education Department
Lesson Plans



SIMULATED DIGS: LAYER CAKE, SHOEBOX, AND SCHOOLYARD

Contents

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THE ARCHER SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

OVERVIEW: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW IN BRIEF

PART ONE: BASICS OF ARCHAEOLOGY FOR SIMULATED DIG USERS

Tips and essential information to help teachers design a dig, encourage critical thinking, and develop students' skills across the curriculum.

- Definitions,
- How Sites Become Lost
- Excavation
- Dig Design Tips
- Start and End with Questions

PART TWO: SIMULATED DIGS

LAYER CAKE ARCHAEOLOGY

Almost everyone likes cake! Digging (and eating) the layers of a cake is a fun and easy way for children to learn the basic principles and techniques of archaeological excavation. For young elementary grades, especially K–2.

TRANSPARENT SHOEBOX DIG

The shoebox dig is created in a transparent plastic box with a lid. The teacher tells a story about two or more cultures, and the students help create the layers and deposit the artifacts representing the cultures. Since the shoebox is transparent, students can see the layers being formed. Designed for grades K–2.

SHOEBOX DIG

Students uncover the stratified layers in a shoebox in this “blind” dig that mimics a real excavation. This is a manageable, compact, and fun (although sometimes messy!) dig for older elementary school children that can be modified for middle school.

TRANSPARENT SHOEBOX AND SHOEBOX DIG PHOTOGRAPHS

SCHOOLYARD DIG

Students become archaeologists and uncover part of a single-layer (one-period) site. This dig works well with older elementary ages and can be adapted for middle and high school as well. This “blind” dig is a full-scale simulated excavation, requiring considerable planning.

RECORD SHEETS

PART THREE: RESOURCES & NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR SIMULATED DIG USERS