

Unit Plan: Learning from the Past Through Artefacts

Student: Azeem (Grade 2)

Lesson 1: The Artefact Detective

Focus: Understanding what an artefact is by examining its features (Form).

Materials Needed:

- A personal object that is special to Azeem (e.g., a favorite toy, a gift, a souvenir)
- Printouts or a screen to display images of various historical artefacts
- "Artefact Detective" worksheet (can be a simple notebook page with prompts)
- Air-dry clay or salt dough
- Simple carving tools (e.g., a popsicle stick, a plastic knife)
- Magnifying glass (optional)

Activity 1: My Personal "Artefact" Show and Tell

Goal: To connect the concept of artefacts to personal, meaningful objects.

1. Ask Azeem to choose one object in his room that is very special to him.
2. Explain that an artefact is any object made or used by people. Right now, this is his object, but in 100 years, it could be an artefact in a museum that tells people something about a 2nd-grade boy named Azeem!
3. Have Azeem present his object. As he talks, guide him with questions about its **form**:
 - What is it made of? (Plastic, wood, fabric?)
 - What colors and shapes do you see?
 - Does it have any special markings, words, or pictures on it?
 - How does it feel? (Smooth, bumpy, soft, hard?)

Activity 2: Investigating Ancient Objects

Goal: To practice observation skills and learn the vocabulary to describe an artefact's form.

1. Show Azeem images of 3-4 different historical artefacts (e.g., an ancient clay pot, an arrowhead, an old coin, an Egyptian hieroglyph tablet).
2. Introduce him as "Detective Azeem." His mission is to investigate these mysterious objects from the past.
3. For each image, he will use his "Artefact Detective" worksheet (or notebook) to record his observations. Prompts can include:
 - **Name of Artefact:** (Give him the name, e.g., "Roman Coin")
 - **What material do you think it's made of?** (Clay, stone, metal?)
 - **What colors and shapes do you see?** (Round, brown, has a face on it)
 - **Draw a quick sketch of the artefact.**
 - **What do you notice that is interesting or strange?** (e.g., "The pot has pointy handles.")
4. Encourage him to use the magnifying glass on the screen or printout to look for tiny details.

Activity 3: Create Your Own "Ancient" Artefact

Goal: To creatively apply the concept of form by designing and making an artefact.

1. Tell Azeem he is now an ancient artisan. His job is to create an artefact that a future detective might find.
2. Give him a ball of air-dry clay or salt dough. Ask him to think about what he wants to make. Will it be a piece of pottery, a tool, a tablet with a secret message, or a decorative medallion?
3. As he works, ask him to think about its **form**. He should make deliberate choices about its shape, size, and markings. He can use the popsicle stick or other tools to carve patterns, symbols, or even his initials into the clay.
4. Once finished, set the artefact aside to dry. Explain that archaeologists often find broken pieces, so it's okay if it's not perfect!

Reflection:

At the end of the lesson, look at Azeem's special object, the pictures of ancient artefacts, and his own clay creation. Ask him questions to help him reflect:

- "What do all of these objects have in common?" (They were all made by people).
- "Why is it important to look closely at an artefact's details, like its shape and markings?" (They give us clues about it).
- "If someone found your clay artefact 1,000 years from now, what do you think they would learn about its form?"

Resource Detail:

- **Images of Artefacts:** Use museum websites like The British Museum or The Smithsonian for high-quality, free-to-use images of artefacts suitable for children. Search for "Ancient Greek pottery," "Roman coins," or "Viking tools."
- **Salt Dough Recipe:** 2 cups all-purpose flour, 1 cup salt, 1 cup cold water. Mix, knead for 10 minutes, and create. Bake at 200°F (90°C) until hard or let air dry for a few days.

Lesson 2: What Stories Do Artefacts Tell?

Focus: Understanding how an artefact was used (Function) and what it reveals about the past.

Materials Needed:

- A small bag or box (a "mystery box")
- 3-4 interesting but common household objects (e.g., a whisk, a garlic press, a tea infuser, a key)
- The images of artefacts from Lesson 1
- Azeem's clay artefact from Lesson 1
- Paper, pencils, and colored markers
- Images comparing ancient and modern objects (e.g., quill pen vs. modern pen; abacus vs. calculator)

Activity 1: The Mystery Box Challenge

Goal: To practice inferring an object's function from its form.

1. Place a household object inside the mystery box or bag without Azeem seeing it.
2. Have him reach inside (no peeking!) and describe what he feels (its form). Ask: "Is it sharp? Is it round? Is it metal?"

3. Based on how it feels, ask him to guess its **function**: "What do you think it's used for?"
4. After he guesses, reveal the object. Discuss how the clues from its form helped him figure out its function. Repeat for a few objects.
5. Now, show him the pictures of the ancient artefacts again. Pick one, like the arrowhead. Say, "We know its form—it's sharp, pointed, and made of stone. What do you think its **function** was? What was it used for?" Guide him to brainstorm ideas (hunting, carving, defense).

Activity 2: Story of the Artefact

Goal: To creatively imagine the life and culture connected to an artefact.

1. Ask Azeem to choose his favorite historical artefact from the pictures, or he can use the clay artefact he made.
2. Tell him his task is to bring this artefact to life by creating a story about it. It can be a short comic strip, a drawing with a caption, or a story you write down as he tells it.
3. Prompt his imagination with questions:
 - Who made this? What was their name?
 - How did they use it every day? Was it for work, for fun, or for something special?
 - Imagine a day in the life of the person who owned this. What did they do?
 - How did the artefact get lost or left behind for us to find?
4. This activity helps him understand that artefacts are not just objects; they are connected to real people and their lives.

Activity 3: Then and Now

Goal: To understand the concept of change over time by comparing the form and function of ancient and modern objects.

1. Show Azeem a pair of images: an ancient object and its modern equivalent. For example, an ancient oil lamp and a modern electric lamp.
2. Ask him: "What is the **function** of both these objects?" (To create light).
3. Then ask: "How is their **form** different?" (One uses fire, is made of clay; the other uses electricity, is made of plastic/metal).
4. On a piece of paper, have him draw the "Then" object on one side and the "Now" object on the other. He can label the parts and write one sentence explaining that they have the same function but a different form.
5. Do this for another pair, like a quill pen and a ballpoint pen, or an abacus and a calculator.

Reflection:

Review the day's activities. Ask Azeem to reflect on the link between form and function:

- "How does looking at an object's shape and material (form) help us guess what it was used for (function)?"
- "Does knowing what an artefact was used for change how you think about the people who made it? How?"
- "Why do you think the form of objects like lamps and pens has changed so much over time?" (This introduces concepts like invention and improvement).

Resource Detail:

- **Then and Now Images:** A simple online search for "ancient vs modern technology for kids" will provide many great image pairs. Look for lighting, writing tools, communication (messengers vs. phones), and transportation (chariots vs. cars).

Lesson 3: Our Family's Artefacts

Focus: Applying artefact analysis skills to personal history and creating a meaningful collection.

Materials Needed:

- A family member to interview (parent, grandparent, etc., in person or via video call)
- Notebook and pencil for the interview
- An old or special family object (the "family artefact")
- Cardstock or paper to make a museum label
- A shoebox or small cardboard box for the "Time Capsule"
- Art supplies for decorating the box (markers, stickers, paint)
- 3-5 of Azeem's own small items to put in the time capsule

Activity 1: The Family History Interview

Goal: To use research and communication skills to learn the story behind a family artefact.

1. Help Azeem prepare for his role as a family historian. Together, brainstorm 3-4 questions to ask a family member about an old object in the house. The questions could be:
 - Can you show me an object that is old or special to our family?
 - Can you describe it for me? (Form)
 - What was it used for, or why is it special? (Function)
 - Can you tell me a story about this object? (History/Memory)
2. Azeem will then conduct the interview. Encourage him to listen carefully and jot down some notes or draw a picture of the object.
3. This activity helps him see that history isn't just in museums; it's in his own home and family.

Activity 2: Curate a Museum Exhibit

Goal: To synthesize information about an artefact and present it clearly.

1. Using the information from the interview, Azeem will become a museum curator. His job is to create an exhibit for the family artefact.
2. He will create a museum label on a piece of cardstock. The label should include:
 - **Name of the Artefact:** (e.g., "Grandma's Locket")
 - **Description (Form):** "This is a small, heart-shaped locket made of silver. It has flowers carved on the front."
 - **Story (Function/History):** "This was a gift to my grandma from my grandpa. It was used to hold tiny pictures of them. It is special because it reminds our family of their love."
3. He can then set up his exhibit: place the object on a small cloth or stand with the label proudly displayed next to it. He can then present his exhibit to the family.

Activity 3: My 2nd Grade Time Capsule

Goal: To reflect on personal identity and understand how today's objects become tomorrow's artefacts.

1. Explain to Azeem that he is going to create a time capsule for someone to find in the future. This capsule will be a collection of "artefacts" that tell the story of his life right now.
2. First, he gets to decorate the shoebox to make it his official time capsule.
3. Next, he needs to choose 3-5 small objects that represent him. Examples could be a favorite small toy, a drawing he is proud of, a ticket stub from a movie, or a rock from a special place.

4. For each object, he will write a short "artefact label" on a slip of paper explaining what it is and why it's important to him. For example: "This is a LEGO minifigure. Its function is for playing. I chose it because building things is my favorite hobby in 2nd grade."
5. Place the items and their labels in the box. Seal it and write "Do not open until [a future date]!" on the top.

Reflection:

Sit with Azeem and his time capsule. Look back at the whole unit and ask reflective questions:

- "How did talking to our family help you understand that we have our own history and our own artefacts?"
- "What do you think someone in the future would learn about you if they found your time capsule?"
- "We've learned about artefacts from long ago and from our own family. What is the most important thing artefacts teach us?" (Guide him toward the central idea: they help us understand how people lived and what was important to them).

Resource Detail:

- **Family Members:** This is a great opportunity to connect with extended family. If grandparents or other relatives live far away, the interview can be done over a video call, making the experience even more memorable.
- **Time Capsule Items:** Encourage items that reflect personality and culture, not just commercial toys. This could be a recipe, a leaf from a favorite park, or a picture of his family.