



**Art and ARTifacts: Using Multiple Sources to Interpret the Past**

**Grade:** 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

**Subjects:** History, Virginia Studies, English

*Time:* 45 minutes – 1 hour

*Class Size:* Adaptable

*Skills:* Using historical documents, observation, interpretation, analytical thinking

*Strategies:* Have students read and interpret primary sources to gain understanding of historical people and events. Have students utilize multiple lines of analysis to form interpretations.

<b>Student will:</b>	<b>SOLs</b>
VS.1 Students will demonstrate skills for historical thinking and geographic analysis by: a) analyzing and interpreting artifacts and primary and secondary sources to understand events in Virginia history VS.2 Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between physical geography and the lives of native peoples of Virginia by: f) describing how archaeologists have recovered new material evidence at sites including Jamestown VS.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the first permanent English settlement in America by: f) describing the hardships faced by settlers at Jamestown and the changes that took place to ensure survival VS.4 Demonstrate an understanding of life in the Virginia colony by: e) describing everyday life in colonial Virginia	<b>VS.1, VS.2, VS.3, VS.4</b>
4.4, 5.4, 6.4 Expand vocabulary when reading and apply previous knowledge and context clues to determine meanings of new words 4.6, 5.6, 6.6 Read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction texts. Use context to clarify meanings of unfamiliar words. Draw conclusions and compare and contrast information.	<b>English 4.4, 4.6, 5.4, 5.6, 6.4, 6.6</b>

**Background**

Archaeologists use a variety of primary and secondary sources to understand historical events and cultural practices. These sources extend beyond written texts to include illustrative or artistic sources such as engravings, maps, photographs, and paintings. Like artifacts, these creations also form part of a group’s material culture. Such illustrations provide a snapshot of daily life within the past, displaying not only what kinds of items people used but also how they used those materials. Therefore, archaeologists can use historical illustrations to interpret artifacts that they find in the ground and gain additional insight on past lifeways.

Visual representations become particularly invaluable for people and items not detailed in the written historical record. For instance, English, Powhatan, and African women are rarely mentioned in early Jamestown documents. However, contemporary paintings and drawings show what types of clothing and accessories these women wore, the types of work they performed, and their daily surroundings. Archaeologists can then couple this information with finds such as bodkins (decorative tools used for lacing corsets and later worn as headpins), mussel shell beads (likely made by Native American women



within James Fort), and spindle whorls (used to keep spindles on spinning wheels rotating at a constant speed) to form a more complete understanding of these women's lives.

This lesson will illustrate to students how art and artifacts can be used together to interpret the past. Using the concept of "art as artifact," students will first analyze historical artistic documents in terms of author, subject matter, and potential bias. Students will then compare and contrast the artwork with artifacts recovered at Jamestown to understand how art can provide insight on daily life at the fort.

**Resources and materials:** Lesson includes a student worksheet with images from historical documents and Jamestown artifacts.

### Procedure

Discuss how archaeologists use both scientific excavation and historical documents to understand the past. Review the concept of bias. Have students complete the included worksheet. If time allows, review their answers in groups or together as a class using the discussion questions below. Instructors may also choose to show students the Jamestown in a Minute: Sketch of a Soldier video that discusses how the artistic inlay mirrored life at Jamestown. Video is available at:

<https://historicjamestowne.org/education/for-kids-and-families/jr-kids-at-home/art/>.

### Discussion Questions

- Were students surprised that archaeologists use artwork to know more about historical people and events? Why or why not? *Answers will vary. Students may compare and contrast scientific analysis and artistic creations.*
- Can art be an artifact? An artifact a piece of art? *Both are true. Art can be analyzed as an artifact in terms of creator, origin, and material. Artifacts in turn can have artistic elements. For example, the inlay in Part II is both an artifact recovered through excavation and an artistic creation. Both art and artifacts are part of a group's material culture.*
- Discuss students' answers to Question 2 in Part III. What other visual sources did they list? Were any modern? What kinds of information might these images offer archaeologists? *Answers will vary. Students may list cave drawings, petroglyphs, hieroglyphs, photographs, daguerreotypes, carvings, etc. Such illustrations might show aspects of daily life including historical buildings, clothing, diet, objects, and tasks. They also might offer a detailed record of historical events.*

**To learn more** and view additional lesson plans visit *Jamestown Rediscovery* at <https://historicjamestowne.org/>



## Additional Resources

Instructors are encouraged to review the following for additional information on the historical documents and artifacts used within this lesson. Please note that this content is written for adult audiences and is intended as a guide to enhance instructors' background knowledge prior to the lesson.

*Bartmann jug:* These vessels are known as Bartmann jugs, Bartmann meaning “bearded man” in German. These jugs were used for a variety of purposes but primarily to hold and decant beer and wine. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/material/frechen/> and <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/bartmann-jugs/>

*Broadsword:* The colonists brought a variety of weapons, armor, and military equipment to Jamestown to guard against possible attack by both the Spanish and Virginia Indians. Over time, the settlers either discarded these items or modified them to better fit their needs. This nearly-complete broadsword was found in the Blacksmith Shop/Bakery. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/may-2007/> and <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/category/arms-armor/>

*Captain John Smith on his Map of New England:* This engraving is based on an image of John Smith that appeared on his 1616 map of New England. Smith's map was the first time that phrase was used for the region. On it he listed the names of towns that did not yet exist to make the region seem more welcoming to potential English colonists. Learn more: [https://npg.si.edu/object/npg\\_NPG.72.113](https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.72.113) and <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/4/>

*Doublet button:* This button likely fastened a doublet, a short, tight-fitting jacket or vest worn by men between the 14<sup>th</sup> and late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The silver thread around its base indicates that the garment served as a status symbol for one of the elite settlers. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/doublet-button/>

*John Smith's Map of Virginia, 1612:* John Smith drew this map of Virginia based on his exploratory travels around the Chesapeake Bay. It includes the location of the surrounding Virginia Indian settlements and a sketch of a seated Chief Powhatan. Learn more: [https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Smith\\_Map](https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Smith_Map)

*The Merry Family, Jan Steen, 1668:* This painting shows a family celebrating at mealtime. Surrounding them are various examples of 17<sup>th</sup>-century household items, similar to artifacts found at Jamestown. Learn more: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-C-229>

*Mussel shell beads:* Evidence indicates that mussel shell beads were made by Indian women living and working at James Fort. Such beads could be used as personal adornment, trade items, or symbolic exchanges during marriage ceremonies. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/mussel-shell-beads/>

*Native American pot:* Vessels of this type are known as Potomac Creek. Virginia Indians used round-bottomed pots such as this one over continual cooking fires. This pot might have been brought into James Fort containing a prepared stew of meat and maize. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/potomac-pot/>



*Native American tobacco pipe:* Tobacco and smoking were important parts of Virginia Indian rituals and remain so today. This pipe is nearly intact and has decorative rouletting around its bowl. Learn more:

<https://historicjamestowne.org/october-2009-2/> and  
<https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/horse-pipe/>

*Soldier Inlay:* This inlay probably once decorated the stock of a firearm that belonged to one of the fort's gentlemen. Drawn in the style of Dutch artist Jacob de Gheyn II, it depicts a soldier dressed in a style similar to what the settlers would have worn. Learn more:

<https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/soldier-inlay/>

*Trumpet mouthpiece:* In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, trumpets were used to signal between ships and transmit commands on battlefields. This trumpet may be the earliest English trumpet in America identified thus far. Learn more: <https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/trumpet-mouthpiece-2/>

*Wine bottle:* In the early 1600s, when water was not to be trusted, Englishmen drank 40 gallons of alcohol a year per capita. This wine bottle is one of ten found upright on the floor of a late 17<sup>th</sup>-century cellar at Jamestown. It is marked with the initials "FN," indicating that it belonged to Francis Nicholson who was the governor of Virginia between 1698 to 1705. Nicholson was responsible for moving the capital from Jamestown to Williamsburg in 1699. Learn more:

<https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/nicholson-bottles/>



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Art and ARTifacts: Using Multiple Sources to Interpret the Past

### **Vocabulary**

*Archaeologist*: a scientist who studies how people lived within the past

*Artifact*: an object made or used by a person in the past

*Bias*: a preference for one thing over another that leads to an unfair or incomplete representation or interpretation

*Excavation*: the scientific removal of soil and artifacts from an archaeological site

*Feature*: a non-moveable part of an archaeological site, such as pits or building walls

*Material culture*: a broad term meaning all objects made and used by a group of people that show how they live or lived

*Site*: a place used by people in the past containing artifacts and/or features

### **Background**

Archaeologists use a variety of sources to understand people and events of the past. Alongside scientific excavation and written texts, archaeologists can also use historical illustrations and artwork. Like artifacts, these visual sources make up part of a particular group's material culture. They can give a picture of daily life in the past including everyday clothing, objects, and tasks. However, like written sources, they can also contain bias.

Archaeologists can then compare the artifacts and features they find in the ground to what they see in the illustrations. This comparison helps archaeologists understand how their finds were used in the past, as well as which documents are the most accurate.

### **Directions**

#### **Part I**

Examine the three documents below. Use each document to answer the following questions.



*Sketch of Chief Powhatan on Captain John Smith's Map of Virginia, 1612  
(Preservation Virginia)*

1. Who created this document and what was its purpose?
2. Which parts of the image do you think are accurate? Which ones might be biased?
3. What else would you like to know about this document?
4. What kinds of information might an archaeologist get from this document?



*Captain John Smith, engraving copied from  
image on Smith's Map of New England, c. 1617  
(Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery)*

1. Smith was not born a gentleman. Why would he have himself drawn like this? Why would he include an image of himself along with the map in his books?
2. Which parts of the image of Smith do you think are accurate? Which ones might be biased?
3. What else would you like to know about this document?
4. What kinds of information might an archaeologist get from this document?



*The Merry Family, Dutch painter Jan Steen, 1668 (Rijksmuseum)*

1. Who created this painting and what was its purpose?
2. Which parts of the image do you think are accurate? Which ones might be biased?
3. What else would you like to know about this document?
4. What kinds of information might an archaeologist get from this document?



Part II

Archaeologists found millions of artifacts at Jamestown, including the ones shown below. Examine the three groups of artifacts and use them to answer the following questions.

**Group 1**



*Broadsword*



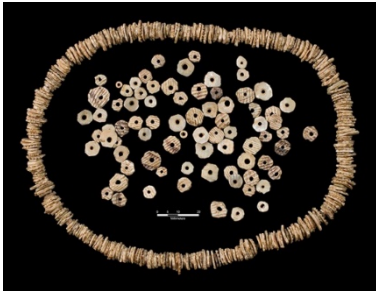
*Doublet (jacket) button*



*Firearm inlay (decoration) carved with drawing of a soldier*

1. What might these artifacts tell archaeologists about life at Jamestown?
2. Do you think the inlay is art or an artifact or both? Explain your answer.
3. Compare these artifacts with the engraving of Captain John Smith. How accurate was the engraving?

Group 2



*Mussel shell beads*



*Native American pot*



*Native American tobacco pipe*

1. What might these artifacts tell archaeologists about life at and near Jamestown?
2. Archaeologists found evidence that Native women were making beads within James Fort. Remember that artifacts can have many uses. How might Native peoples and colonists use these beads?
3. Native peoples brought food supplies, including stews, to the colonists in rounded pots like this one. Why were these supplies so important for the English? What might happen during times of conflict when exchange stopped?
4. Compare these artifacts with Smith's drawing of Chief Powhatan and his people. How accurate was his drawing?

Group 3



*Bartmann jug for wine or beer*



*Trumpet mouthpiece*



*Wine bottle*

1. What might these artifacts tell archaeologists about life at Jamestown?
2. Trumpets were used both for military commands and entertainment. Archaeologists have also found dice, gaming pieces, and small toys at Jamestown. Do these finds surprise you? Why or why not?
3. Compare these artifacts with Steen's painting of 17<sup>th</sup>-century family life. How accurate was his painting?

