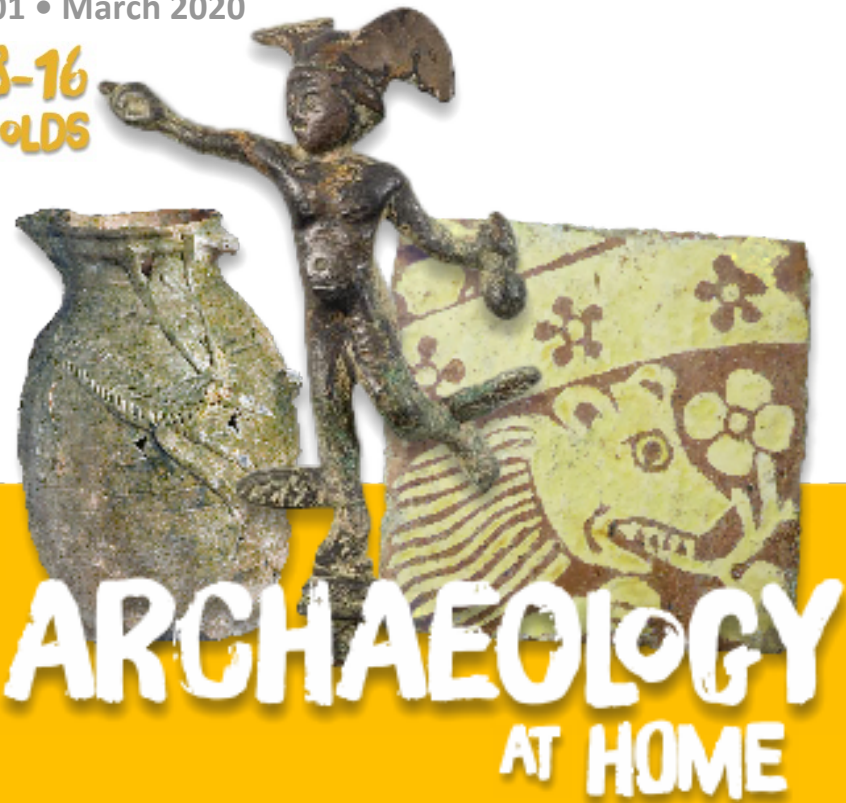


FOR 8-16
YEAR OLDS



What's inside

Become a stay-at-home archaeologist	1
What do archaeologists actually do?	2
Spot the odd ones out!	3
What survives?	4
Rot or not?	5
Word Search	6
Answers	7 - 8



Archaeology is...
*...the study of the past using
 the remains which people
 have left behind.*

Become a stay-at-home archaeologist

With no school for a while and more time at home, now is the perfect time to dig into the past and discover what archaeology is all about!

Use this guide to find out what archaeologists really do and brush up on the skills you need to tell your trowel from your topsoil.

You don't need any special equipment to be a stay-at-home archaeologist, just plenty of energy and some spare time.

All activities use everyday items that you can find around the house. If you don't have something don't worry, just draw a picture instead!



The word archaeology comes from two Greek words: **archaia** which means ancient and **logos** meaning science or theory.

What do archaeologists actually do?

Archaeologists try to find out about people from the past by searching for the remains they have left behind – most of it is rubbish!

Over time buildings and artefacts (objects made by people) have become buried so archaeologists use a range of different techniques to find them. One way to do this is to excavate – this involves digging down layer by layer and recording everything that is found.

Archaeologists then study what they have found and try to recreate what happened in the past - a bit like piecing together a giant jigsaw. Unfortunately not everything survives though so it's often a puzzle with missing pieces!



Archaeology is the study of people in the past, which means it doesn't involve dinosaurs!



Image from Flickr by Adam Levine. Licensed under Creative Commons



UNED Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia / CC BY



"Diving" by Sandwich via Flickr Creative Commons

Spot the odd ones out!

Where wouldn't you find an archaeologist? (clues on page 7)



Rob Hodgkins/Flickr, CC BY-SA



Matti Mattila / CC BY



© John Seaman Photography



Aerial view of Villarica volcano. Credit: Iain and Sarah/Creative Commons



What survives?

Not everything survives buried underground. Over time artefacts and buildings can rot away. How long they survive depends on what they are made of.

Archaeologists divide what artefacts are made of into two groups: **organic** and **inorganic**.

Organic materials are made from something that was once alive like bone, wood, leather and cloth (wool comes from a sheep, leather is made from animal skin and wood from a tree). Inorganic materials have never been alive and include things like stone, pottery and metals.

As a general rule, organic materials rot away quicker than inorganic objects. Stone and pot usually survive the longest – so we tend to find many more things made of these materials than any of the others.

Metal objects rot very easily in wet conditions, especially those made from iron: if iron gets wet, rust appears on the surface and eventually all the metal will completely disappear, leaving only a stain in the soil.

Because different materials survive in different ways we don't always have all the clues we need to help us understand how people lived in the past.

Think about a house made out of wood with a stone tiled roof – after many hundreds of years the wood may have rotted away, but the tiles will have survived. So how do we begin to reconstruct the house when most of the pieces are missing? Archaeologists will come up with ideas based on the evidence but they don't always agree!



Organic materials survive longest in very dry conditions (like in a desert) or if they are completely waterlogged (like in a well).

Archaeologists call these **anaerobic** conditions, which means without air.

Image by bgrfx, freepik.com

Rot or not?

Play a game to see how long everyday modern materials survive in the ground (answers on page 7)

Rot or not? What to do

Grab a mix of household items made from different materials. Order them with the items you think will rot away quickest at one end and the items that will survive the longest at the other end.

If you have them, find the following items: banana/ apple/orange • piece of cardboard • newspaper • glass bottle • wool sock • aluminum can • flower • paper • disposable nappy • plastic bag • foam plastic cup • leather shoe plastic • drinks bottle • crisp packet. If you don't have these things to hand, write or draw them onto scraps of paper and order these instead.



Next draw two overlapping circles. List or draw organic items in one, inorganic in the other and unknowns in the middle.

Now look at your timeline, is there anything you want to change? Remember that organic materials usually rot quickest...

C	R	H	T	C	A	T	T	E	I	I	G	N	B
A	R	C	H	A	E	O	L	O	G	I	S	T	I
H	R	N	I	S	I	N	O	R	G	A	N	I	C
A	I	X	E	X	C	A	V	A	T	I	O	N	W
L	T	O	C	O	G	I	A	A	R	R	I	R	G
A	T	O	R	A	P	C	P	R	C	T	N	L	A
X	I	R	P	G	R	C	R	T	L	S	C	R	L
T	A	A	O	S	A	S	T	E	A	A	B	D	S
N	O	E	T	W	O	N	G	F	H	O	O	N	N
H	E	O	N	S	E	I	I	A	P	A	S	T	B
A	C	E	I	R	T	L	L	C	O	C	O	A	E
R	O	C	T	T	I	L	N	T	A	C	D	T	N
N	I	T	G	R	O	B	O	G	I	D	P	C	C
A	N	A	E	R	O	B	I	C	I	A	C	D	C

Word Search

How quickly can you find the following archaeological words:

- Artefact
- Topsoil
- Past
- Archaeologist
- Dig
- Inorganic
- Anaerobic
- Excavation
- Trowel
- Organic



Can you remember what each word means? Go back to find out or check the word list on page 8.

Rot or Not

Average times:

- A banana peel takes three to four weeks to rot away
- A newspaper takes six weeks to rot away
- An apple takes two months to rot away
- An orange takes six months to rot away
- A flower takes up to a year to rot away
- A piece of paper takes one to two years to rot away
- A wool sock takes one to five years to rot away
- A piece of cardboard takes five years to rot away
- A leather shoe takes 25 to 40 years to rot away
- A foamed plastic cup takes 50 years to rot away
- A crisp packet takes 75 years to rot away
- A plastic bag takes 200 years to rot away
- An aluminium can takes 450 years to rot away
- A disposable nappy takes 500 years to rot away
- A plastic drinks bottle takes a million years to rot away
- A glass bottle takes one to two million years to rot away



Overlapping circle

Your organic circle should have a: banana, newspaper, apple, orange, flower, paper, wool socks, cardboard and leather.

Your inorganic circle should have a: foamed cup, crisp packet, plastic bag, aluminum can, disposable nappy, plastic bottle, glass bottle.

Take another look at this list - did you notice that all the organic materials are at the top and the inorganic materials at the bottom?



Image by jcomp, freepik.com

Odd one out

The odd ones out are the dinosaur excavation and the volcano as these are studied by paleontologists (who study dinosaurs) and geologists (who study the earth) and not archaeologists.

Archaeologists use archives, libraries and museums to find out as much as they can about a site before they investigate it. They use planes to take pictures from the air to see things that aren't easy to spot on the ground and dive underwater to record archaeology on the seabed. Archaeologists are also found working on building sites, in trenches excavating anything built by people and in caves.

Odd one out clue

The pictures show (from left to right, top to bottom): excavating a dinosaur, an archive/library, a diver, a plane, a building site, a museum, a volcano, excavating a building, and a cave.

Archaeological word list

Artefact - objects made by people

Topsoil – top layer of soil that you dig through to find the archaeology beneath

Archaeologist – someone who studies the past using the remains that people have left behind.

Dig – another word for excavation

Inorganic - materials that have never been alive like stone, pottery and metals.

Anaerobic conditions – places without air, usually very dry places or very wet.

Excavation - digging down layer by layer searching for evidence of the past

Trowel – a pointed digging tool used to excavate

Organic – materials made from something that was once alive like bone, wood, leather and cloth
