

What is Archaeology?

Workshop 1, Activity 1

Activity Outline

This exercise aims to introduce workshop participants to the basic building blocks of archaeological knowledge: material culture and its interpretation. It also aims to demonstrate how interpretation varies depending on the person or group doing the interpreting. The exercise is designed to show the diversity of interpretations that the same objects can result in.

Duration: c. 20 minutes

Participant Instructions

For this exercise, participants are divided into groups of c.5 persons each. Each group receives an archaeological 'finds bag' containing an identical collection of objects (e.g. a drinks can, chocolate wrappings, a toy car, etc.).

Using your collection of 'finds', as a group write down a few sentences about the people who these objects, or material culture, belonged to:

- What can these objects tell us about the people who owned them and why?
- Who were these people?
- What did they do/what professions did they have?
- What was their social status?
- Why did they throw these things away?
- What can it mean that these things were found together in one place?

After 10 minutes of discussion, each group shares their interpretations with the wider group, followed by a discussion.