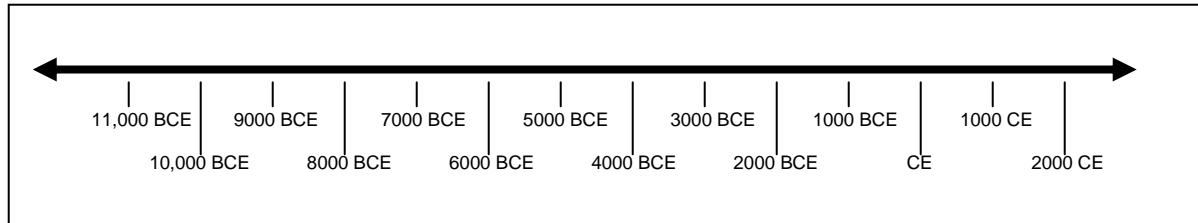




NC PAST: History from Things
Research Laboratories of Archaeology, UNC
NC Mathematics and Science Education Network

Using Timelines to Develop an Understanding of Deep History



Timeline Showing Sustained Human Occupation in the Americas

Materials

- Timeline (included in kit)
- Small pieces of paper
- Scotch tape
- Event and Lifestyle cards (included in kit)

Essential Understandings

- Sustained human occupation in the Americas extends back at least 13,000 years.
- Archaeological research is essential to expanding our knowledge of the human past.
- American history, as it has been traditionally represented at the K-12 level, focuses almost exclusively on the written past and, more specifically, on the “time since Columbus.”

Evidence of Understanding

- Comments and observations made during the classroom discussion.
- Activity may be used as a pre- and/or post-unit assessment.

Basic Activity to Build Understanding

1. Hang the timeline on the wall. Explain to students that each segment represents 1000 years of human occupation in the Americas. Point out that people may have arrived in the Americas earlier than 13,000 years ago, but the timeline reflects what has been the most widely accepted date among archaeologists for sustained occupation. Attach the Event card entitled “Earliest known sustained occupation of the Americas” near 11,000 BCE on the timeline.

2. Give the students three small pieces of paper and ask them to write down an event from American history on each piece (events should be something they can come up with off the top of their heads). Give them a few minutes to do this. (For large groups, pair students and ask them to come up with one or two events upon which they can both agree.)

3. When finished, ask individual students or pairs to share an event by reading it to the group. Then have them tape the piece of paper on the timeline to indicate the approximate date for the

event. Allow all individuals or pairs to place at least one event on the timeline before moving to the next step.

4. Ask students to make observations about the placement of events on the timeline. They will comment on the fact that their events largely fall within the last 500 years. Have students generate explanations for this; encourage them to give multiple explanations.

5. Help students recognize that America has a rich human history that is not written but can be explored through archaeological research.

Alternative Activity to Build Understanding

(This activity helps students place events from North Carolina history within the context of world history. It may be used as a stand-alone alternative to the basic activity described above, but it is also effective when paired with the optional follow-up activity.)

1. Hang the timeline on the wall. Explain to students that each segment represents 1000 years of human occupation in the Americas.

2. Explain that many archaeologists believe the first people reached America by crossing the Bering Land Bridge. This area between northeast Asia and Alaska is now submerged beneath the Bering Strait, but it would have been exposed above sea level between 22,000 and 7,000 years ago when much of the world's water was frozen in glaciers. Sometime around 11,000 BCE, people may have walked across the Bering Land Bridge into North America. (People may have reached the Americas earlier, but 11,000 BCE is the most widely accepted date among archaeologists for sustained occupation.) Attach the Event card entitled "Earliest known sustained occupation of the Americas" near 11,000 BCE on the timeline.

3. Explain that the people who crossed the Bering Land Bridge slowly spread across North America and all the way to the southern tip of South America. Archaeologists think they arrived in the area now known as North Carolina sometime between 10,000 and 9000 BCE. Attach the Event card entitled "First people arrive in North Carolina" between 10,000 and 9000 BCE on the timeline.

4. Give the students two small pieces of paper. Ask them to write down an event from human history on one piece and an event from North Carolina history on the other (events should be something they can come up with off the top of their heads). Give them a few minutes to do this. (For large groups, pair students and ask them to come up with two events upon which they can both agree.)

5. When finished, ask individual students or pairs to share an event by reading it to the group. Then have them tape the piece of paper on the timeline to indicate the approximate date of the event. If the event occurred in North Carolina, have them tape the piece of paper directly on the timeline. If the event occurred elsewhere in the Americas, have them tape the piece of paper so that it hangs just above the timeline. If the event occurred outside of the Americas, have them

tape the paper so that it hangs just below the timeline. Allow all individuals or pairs to place at least one event on the timeline before moving to the next step.

6. Ask students to make observations about the placement of events on the timeline. They will comment on the fact that their events largely fall within the last 500 years. If they have picked some older events (e.g., pyramids in Egypt, the first Olympics, etc.), they may also notice that even events that they think happened a very long time ago still fall much closer to the present than they do to the time when the earliest people reached North Carolina. Have students generate explanations for this; encourage them to give multiple explanations.

7. Help students recognize that North Carolina has a rich human history that is not written but can be explored through archaeological research.

Optional Follow-up Activity

1. Keep the timeline and its events prominently displayed. As you explore *History from Things* kits with students, ask them to attach the included Event and Lifestyle cards where they belong on the timeline. Encourage them to make their own cards if they would like to add items for which cards are not provided. If appropriate, you may also want to encourage students to make cards for events they learn about in other subjects, such as science.

2. Once the students have explored multiple kits, ask them to make observations about the timeline. They will comment on the fact that as they move forward in time, the items on the timeline tend to cluster closer together. They may also comment on differences in the nature of items on the timeline as they move forward through time. Ask students to draw upon their understanding of archaeological methods and evidence to generate explanations for their observations.