

---

## Lesson 5.4

# ARTIFACT ETHICS

**Subjects:** social studies, language arts.

**Skills:** application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation.

**Strategies:** discussion, values clarification, decision making, problem solving, communication, debate, drawing, composing, writing.

**Duration:** one to three 45-minute periods.

**Class Size:** any; groups of 3 to 4.



Chipped-stone adze from  
Stanly County, North  
Carolina, ca. 8500 BC.

---

## Objectives

In their study of archaeological issues students will use *ethical* dilemmas to:

- examine their own values and beliefs about archaeological site protection.
- evaluate possible actions they might take regarding site and artifact protection.

## Materials

For the teacher, “Dilemma Cards” and 5 × 8 inch index cards; a transparency of “Archaeological Resources Protection Act of North Carolina” for projection. For each student or team, “Dilemma Cards” and a copy of “Archaeological Resources Protection Act of North Carolina.”

## Vocabulary

*Ethics:* the rules of conduct or right and wrong behavior recognized by a society or a profession.

*Values:* established ideas about the way life should be lived; that is, the objects, customs, and ways of acting that members of a given society regard as desirable.

## Background

North Carolina’s archaeological resources are being destroyed at an alarming rate. As a result, scientific data is destroyed, and the peoples of North Carolina lose an important part of their heritage. This lesson encourages students to examine personal beliefs, feelings, and *values* concerning the protection of archaeological sites and artifacts, to decide what action they would take in difficult situations, and to suggest solutions to the problems of archaeological resource destruction. There are no right or wrong answers except where laws apply. This lesson should be taught after the students have established a foundation in archaeological concepts and methods. Federal and state antiquities preservation laws state it is illegal to collect, deface, injure, or excavate sites and artifacts more than 100 years old on public land. Public land includes properties administered by any state or federal agency, such as the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. North Carolina’s archaeological-resource-protection laws apply to all stated-owned land and make it illegal to excavate, remove, or damage archaeological resources more than 50 years old. In North Carolina, public lands are administered by groups such as North Carolina State Parks or State Historic Sites. Archaeologists who conduct

approved field work are granted permits by federal and state agencies.

People hiking, hunting, or camping on public land often discover an archaeological site or artifact. By law, the artifact is to be left in place, and the site is to be undisturbed. Discoveries of rare or remarkable artifacts and sites should be reported to the land managing agency, or, in the case of private lands, to the Office of State Archaeology in Raleigh.

Some sites have been destroyed by people who are interested only in removing, possessing, and sometimes selling artifacts, but not in what they tell us about the past. Most things archaeologists recover from sites are broken and not worth any money. The information these artifacts provide about the past is priceless, however, and once a site has been destroyed, its information is lost forever.

Students should never approach someone they see collecting artifacts or excavating sites on public lands. The best thing to do is to record information about the people—their physical description, what they were seen doing, the license number of their vehicle—and immediately report them to law enforcement authorities. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) allows rewards for those providing information leading to the arrest and conviction of people disturbing sites.

## Setting the Stage

1. Ask students: Have you ever been in a situation when you were not sure of the right way to behave or respond? For example, your best friend had her hair cut in a style you think is unattractive. What do you tell your friend when she asks if you like the way it looks? Or, your best friend shows you some money that he has stolen from another friend's bookbag. What do you say to your friend? Do you report the incident to someone? If so, whom?

2. Distribute or project "Archaeological Resources Protection Act of North Carolina." Review this law and its penalties.

3. Explain that the dilemmas in the following activity will require decision making about difficult situations. As they share solutions to the dilemmas, students should be prepared to give reasons for their decisions.

## Procedure

1. Copy the dilemmas and glue each one on a 5 × 8 index card. Students could also create dilemma cards, with each student responsible for one dilemma.

2. Take one of the dilemma cards and read it aloud to the entire class. Without group discussion, ask the class to write a paragraph or two about how they feel about the dilemma and what they would do about it. They should not put their names on their papers.

Have students turn in their papers (without names) and write several of their solutions on the blackboard until you have listed many strategies and viewpoints.

3. Have students discuss the pros and cons of each solution and perhaps come to a class consensus. This activity can help students examine and clarify their values, while demonstrating there are many perspectives on any issue. Ask students to consider silently what they had originally written. Have they changed their thinking after listening to other viewpoints?

4. Divide the class into groups of 4 to 5 students and give each group one of the dilemma cards. Have students discuss the dilemma as a group and decide how they would solve the problem. If students create a solution they think is better than the ones listed, allow them to share this solution. Allow about 15 minutes for their discussion. Have students choose a spokesperson for each group to report to the class the group's decisions and their reasons for taking the actions

or positions they did. Were they able to all agree on what they would do?

5. Ask students if they had enough information upon which to base their decisions. Ask them if their opinion changed once they heard different points of view.

## Closure

Ask students to share their overall position concerning the protection of archaeological resources. Or, ask them to create a symbol, story, poem, drawing, or song that summarizes their opinion.

## Evaluation

Evaluate student participation in the dilemma discussions and the closure activities.

## Links

Lesson 5.2: “Rock Art.”

Lesson 5.3: “Creating Your Own Rock Art.”

## Sources

Project WILD. 1992. “Ethi-reasoning.” In *Project WILD Activity Guide*, pp. 310–314. 2nd ed. Boulder, Colo.: Western Regional Environmental Education Council.

Smith, Shelley J., Jeanne M. Moe, Kelly A. Letts, and Danielle M. Paterson. 1993. *Intrigue of the Past: A Teacher’s Activity Guide for Fourth through Seventh Grades*. Washington, D.C.:

Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior. [This lesson is adapted from “Artifact Ethics” on pp. 108–113, courtesy of the Bureau of Land Management.]

Ward, H. Trawick, and R. P. Stephen Davis, Jr. 1999. *Time Before History: The Archaeology of North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. [The image in this lesson’s main heading is taken from Figure 2.5.]

## **Archaeological Resources Protection Act of North Carolina** (North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 70, Article 2)

The purpose of this Act is to protect archaeological resources on state lands. Major points of the law are as follows:

- Archaeological resources are material remains of past human activities that are at least 50 years old and are of archaeological interest, including pottery, bottles, weapons, tools, structures, rock art, or graves.
- Permits are required in order to conduct archaeological work on state lands.
- Information about where archaeological sites are located can be kept confidential in order to protect sites from vandalism and looting.
- All illegally obtained artifacts and any equipment and vehicles used while violating this law are subject to forfeiture.

Prohibitions and penalties under the law are as follows:

- No person may excavate, remove, damage, or otherwise alter or deface any archaeological resource located on state-owned land without a permit.
- No person may sell, purchase, exchange, transport, or receive any archaeological resource taken from state-owned lands in violation of the law.
- Any person who knowingly violates the law shall, upon conviction, be fined not more than \$2,000 or be imprisoned not more than six months, or both.
- Each day on which a violation occurs shall be a distinct offense.
- Civil penalties may also be assessed against any person who violates the provisions of the act.

## **Dilemma Cards**

### **Dilemma 1**

You and your family are on a camping vacation in western North Carolina and decide to visit Judaculla Rock. As you approach the boulder, you pass a man and woman walking toward the parking lot and carrying a paper bag. When you get to the Judaculla Rock, you see that there is fresh red and white spray paint on some of the carved figures. The paint is still dripping down the sides of the boulder when you arrive. What do you do?

- Run back to the man and woman and tell them it is against the law to damage rock art.
- Do nothing; mind your own business.
- Run back to the parking lot and get their license number, description of the car and people, and report them immediately to the park ranger.
- Use some of the wet paint to write your name on the rock art, too. After all, the Native Americans and later settlers wrote their names on rocks.
- Call the police when you return home.
- Have your parents make a citizen's arrest of the man and woman.
- Do something else.

### **Dilemma 2**

You are a judge in a case where a man has been charged with removing iron objects from the underwater shipwreck site of the USS Huron at Nags Head. As part of the laws protecting archaeological sites, the boat he used to transport the stolen artifacts has been seized. Without his boat, this fisherman will not be able to support his family. What will you do?

- Put him in prison for six months and keep his boat.
- Fine him \$2,000, but return his boat.
- Release him with a warning.
- Sentence him to 100 hours of community service, requiring him to learn about and then give talks to schools about the importance of protecting archaeological sites.
- Do something else.

### **Dilemma 3**

You are an amateur archaeologist aware that the reservoir from construction of a large dam will eventually cover an entire river basin containing many Woodland Period village sites. One of your friends asks if you want to go down to the river and retrieve just a few artifacts because, after all, if you don't, the artifacts will just be buried under water. What do you do?

- Go and get just one or two artifacts in the river basin. Maybe the law does not apply to areas that are going to be destroyed anyway.
- Don't go with your friend, and if your friend goes, anonymously report him/her to the law.
- Refuse to go and tell your friend that it is against the law.
- Let him or her go and get a few things for you.
- Organize a local group of amateur archaeologists to work with professional archaeologists so that more information can be recovered before the reservoir is flooded.
- Do something else.

### **Dilemma 4**

You are hiking beside a river in a remote section of a North Carolina State Park and discover a large prehistoric pot sticking out of a bank that is eroding. What do you do?

- Try to remove the pot and take it back to the park office.
- Leave the pot where you found it, photograph it, carefully record on a map where you found it and report your information to park officials.
- Leave the pot there and don't tell anyone about it or its location.
- Remove the pot, hide it in your car and take it home.
- Do something else.

### **Dilemma 5**

You are on a scout trip to a national forest and during your hike your troop walks across a plowed field. There are pieces of broken pottery, stone projectile points, and chipped stone tools scattered on the ground. In school you learned that archaeological sites on public land are protected by law and that you should take nothing but photographs and leave nothing but footprints. As you walk across the field, you see your scout leader pick up a few pieces of pottery and a projectile point. Several of the scouts are doing the same. When you tell the leader what your teacher said about not taking artifacts, the leader says, "Taking little things like broken pottery doesn't count." What do you do?

- Act as if you saw nothing and let them take the artifacts home.
- Pick up just one artifact as a souvenir.
- Do nothing, knowing you were obeying the law by not taking anything.
- Find another scout troop.
- Ask your parents to report the scout leader to the Forest Service.
- Ask a professional archaeologist to come and talk to your scout troop.
- Do something else.

### **Dilemma 6**

During the last several years, students at your school have worked hard to convince teachers and the principal that a swimming pool would be an excellent addition to the school's sports program. Pool construction has finally begun next to the playground and during the first day of soil removal, workers uncover the remains of a Late Woodland village site. The principal calls a meeting of the students to discuss the various options listed below. What would you do?

- Call a complete stop to the pool construction, since you cannot allow the present to destroy evidence of the past.
- Decide that many Late Woodland villages have been excavated already, so destroying this one won't matter.
- Notify archaeologists so they can excavate the site, even though this means waiting an extra year for the pool to be completed.
- Let pool construction continue, but first let students pick up visible artifacts to put in a display case at school.
- Do something else.