
Lesson 5.6

A GUIDED JOURNEY INTO THE PAST



Subjects: science, social studies, language arts, visual arts, music.

Skills: synthesis, evaluation.

Strategies: guided imagery, discussion, writing, drawing, composing, visualization.

Duration: 45 to 60 minutes.

Class Size: any.

Palmer spear point from
Stanly County, North
Carolina, 8000–7000 BC.

Objective

In their study of archaeological resource conservation, students will use guided imagery to discover and judge an alternative way to enjoy artifacts without removing them from archaeological sites.

Materials

For the teacher, a copy of “Guided Imagery.”

Background

In her book *Everybody Needs a Rock* (1974), Byrd Baylor expresses the wonder in finding a rock and pondering its source.

“Always sniff a rock,” she says. “Rocks have their own smells. Some kids can tell by sniffing whether a rock came from the middle of the earth or from an ocean or from a mountain where wind and sun touched it every day for a million years.”

Baylor suggests an atmosphere for this experience: “When you are looking at rocks don’t let mothers or fathers or sisters or brothers or even best friends talk to you. Don’t let dogs bark at you or bees buzz at you. But if they do, *don’t worry*.”

To hold a rock in our hand that may have been created millions of years ago sets our imagination in motion. We can transport ourselves back to the time and surroundings of its creation. We can journey with it through time, imagining what other beings might have touched it or used it. Mystery and intrigue are the forces at work in our mind, and many times we want to keep this mysterious object in our possession.

This same mysterious power is held within the artifacts made by the early peoples of North Carolina. Finding an artifact like a beautiful Palmer spear point (see above) made by Archaic people connects us with those humans in a way that books cannot. We can almost sense them, and we desire to know them. What made them laugh and cry? How did they spend their day? As our minds travel back in time and connect to the people whose objects (artifacts) we hold in our hand, we desire to keep the object.

It takes discipline to leave something in its place when we desire to keep it. This exercise will suggest a way for students to learn to control that desire to own an artifact.

Setting the Stage

Share the analogy of finding a rock from the Background. You might want to have students bring their favorite rock to school and share its significance with others.

Procedure

1. Explain that students will be taking a journey inside their minds. The purpose of this journey is to suggest an alternative for appreciating found artifacts without taking them home. Encourage students to relax their bodies, either in their chairs or lying on the floor, and to close their eyes. You can help create the mood by turning the lights off and softly playing appropriate music.

2. Read “Guided Imagery.”

Closure

Have students share what they saw, experienced, felt, or thought during the guided imagery in a discussion, a cooperative team share, a drawing, or a song. Encourage students to suggest many ways to enjoy an artifact without taking it from a site. Examples: draw a picture of the artifact, write a poem or song, compose a story, take a photograph, bring someone else to the site to see the artifact, describe your find to someone else.

Sources

Baylor, Bird. 1974. *Everybody Needs a Rock*. New York: Atheneum.

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 “A Journey Back in Time: A Guided Imagery” on pp. 119–121, 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 3.9.]

Guided Imagery

Imagine you are on a camping trip in a state or national park. Your camp is surrounded by beautiful countryside, and above you is a deep blue sky. The wind is blowing in gentle, gusting breezes as you hike along. You stoop to pick up rocks of many shapes, sizes, and colors. You wonder about the rocks' names, how they were formed, how long they have been on the earth. One of these rocks you now hold in your hand. Examining it closely, you notice its edges look broken, just like your mom's pottery vase you broke last summer. Its surface feels smooth and cool and is covered with a geometric pattern.

Suddenly, you realize you have found something special. You remember learning about pottery made by the early peoples of North Carolina and about how archaeologists study these people from their artifacts. You are sure you have found an ancient piece of pottery. You want to keep the pottery sherd so much and you slip it into your pocket. Your heart beats with excitement. You want to run back to camp to share your find. Then you stop yourself. You know artifacts are to be left where they are discovered.

Sitting down, you become very aware of your surroundings. Pottery fragments are scattered here and there. The wind blow gentle breezes through the trees. Crows call to each other. The hot sun warms your back as you gaze out over the landscape. You remove the sherd from your pocket as your mind begins to wander back in time to the village of the ancient people. You are there among the people watching them at their daily activities. In the shade of a tree you see someone making stone tools. A small child watches intently. The rhythmic sounds of meal being ground on a stone can be heard in the distance. In the shade of a storage room, a potter is skillfully creating a clay pot. Small children run about calling to each other.

(Give the students 2 to 3 minutes to do their own dreaming.)

The sound of a crow's call nearby brings you back to the present. You lay the potsherd back where you found it, feeling good about your decision. Before you leave you make a sketch of the potsherd to hang on your bedroom wall.