



Rot or Not?

These activities allow children to discover what items decompose and what items archaeologists find on digs. They also include reflections on religion and culture and personal beliefs.

You have

- A collection of assorted artefacts (ask a metal detector, a local museum or contact the Portable Antiquities Scheme) or a collection of modern discarded objects or a collection of pictures of artefacts/objects
- Pens and pencils
- Paper

Activity

If real finds are available, get the children to sort them by material and decide whether they have changed in the ground - start off their thinking by talking about how cars become rusty and how metals especially change colour as the irreversible chemical changes occur in situ. (Within the burial environment). Alternatively you can do the same exercise using photos of artefacts – you can print some off from www.finds.org.uk

You can do with this modern objects too- look at the contents of the classroom bin or a collection of objects that either you or the children have brought in and work out whether it will rot or not.

Next, choose a child from the group, or ask for a volunteer. The volunteer is going to pretend to be a dead body and lie down on a table at the front of the group!

The children will, either in table groups or as a group, decide where on the body the finds that they are looking at pictures of would be worn, or which part of the grave they would be found in and then, one object at a time, place the pictures of finds on the 'dead' child.

Next, ask the children to think about what objects are important to them and what they show or mean. If they were people from ancient times, what would they like to be buried with?

NB You can use the saved searches on www.finds.org.uk here, via your interactive whiteboard, or set this as homework prior to the lesson, or give the children some group or library time to go and find out.

Hand out the skeleton sheets and ask them to annotate them, writing on the objects that they would choose to be buried with. Engage the class in a plenary, asking the children what other things they think might have been buried with the person. Introduce the topic of beliefs and customs connected with death, burial and the afterlife, e.g. a final feast and drink for the dead, symbols of a person's status, wealth or trade in life, religious objects, heirlooms.

what other things they think might have been buried with the person. Introduce the topic of beliefs and customs connected with death, burial and the afterlife, e.g. a final feast and drink for the dead, symbols of a person's status, wealth or trade in life, religious objects, heirlooms.

Useful questions

- You can introduce elements of comparative religious studies here, the differences between pagan and non-pagan beliefs. Are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs buried with symbols or special objects? Why?
- Can the children think of any other examples?
- After the children have discussed this and filled in the materials (Rot, or Not?) table, get them to present their findings graphically.
- Are there any patterns?
- Are there more of certain types of materials with a group of old objects or artefacts, when compared with more modern objects?
- What seems to survive the best?
- Have they found any examples of reversible changes?
- Why do they think that this is?

Useful websites

www.finds.org.uk – find some artefacts!

www.pastexplorers.org.uk – explore an Anglo Saxon village, find out what it's like to be an archaeologist

This activity was donated by the Portable Antiquities scheme.

creativeminds



The Creative Minds project works with museums libraries and archives across the Yorkshire region, to provide young people with learning opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (S.T.E.M.). This ground-breaking project is the first of its kind in the country and is managed by MLA Yorkshire. This pack was developed by Creative Minds with funding from Yorkshire Forward.

| | National Curriculum | QCA Schemes of Work |
|-------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| KS 1 | Religious Education 1c, 1d, 2d | Unit 3A, Unit 6F |
| | Science Sc2, Sc4 | Unit 1A, Unit 2C |
| | Citizenship 1, 4 | Unit 01, Unit 09 |
| | ICT 1, 5 | Unit 1F, Unit 2C |
| | History 1, 4, 6 | N/A |
| KS 2 | Religious Education 1e, 1f, 2c | Unit 3A, Unit 6F |
| | Science Sc2, Sc4 | Unit 5B, Unit 5D |
| | Citizenship 1, 4 | Unit 01, Unit 09 |
| | ICT 1, 5 | Unit 3D, Unit 6D |
| | History 1, 4, 6 | Unit 18, 6B |