



INQUIRY FIELD GUIDE

*20+ PRACTICAL STRATEGIES AND
PROTOCOLS TO PROMPT QUESTIONS
AND FACILITATE INVESTIGATIONS*

Artifact Study

The What

Artifact studies challenge students to analyze a primary source by identifying evidence, explaining interpretations, and drawing conclusions. Use this format when students analyze an unfamiliar primary source individually, in small groups, or as a whole class.

The How

1. Explain the challenge: Students will analyze a primary source in order to learn more about the topic of study.
2. Introduce the artifact and prompt students to identify as many objective facts as they can, such as maker, date, place of origin, materials, size, shape, color, etc.
3. Guide students through a process of interpreting the artifact by asking them to infer the purpose, use, or importance of the artifact, supporting their inferences with evidence whenever possible.
 - Ex. “Because the object is round, hollow, has a lid, and has evidence of grain inside, we think this was used as a storage container for food.”
4. Ask students to reflect upon the investigation as a whole to draw some conclusions about the individuals or societies who interacted with this artifact, and how and why their stories were preserved.
 - Challenge students to identify what information is missing that would give them a more complete understanding.