

Stratigraphy Activities

Overview:

When archaeologists excavate a site, they dig one layer of dirt at a time and make sure to keep the artifacts from that layer separate from artifacts in all the others. As they dig, archaeologists also record the number and depth of the different layers and date each one by identifying when the artifacts from that deposit were made. Looking at a site's *stratigraphy*, or different layers in the ground, allows archaeologists to create a timeline or chronology.

A site chronology is used to figure out how long a site was occupied. We know that over long periods of time, new layers are deposited on top of the older ones. This also means that the oldest artifacts left behind by people are found in the bottom layer, while more recent artifacts end up in layers closer to the surface. Archaeologists call this the law of superposition.

Knowing what time periods artifacts date to and how the stratigraphy at a site formed over time is an important part of understanding people of the past.

Below are two different activities for making your own stratigraphic drawings at home!

Lifetime Stratigraphy Activity

Ages 5+

Imagine that in 200 years, an archaeologist wanted to learn about your life. What events and objects might tell your story?

Materials:

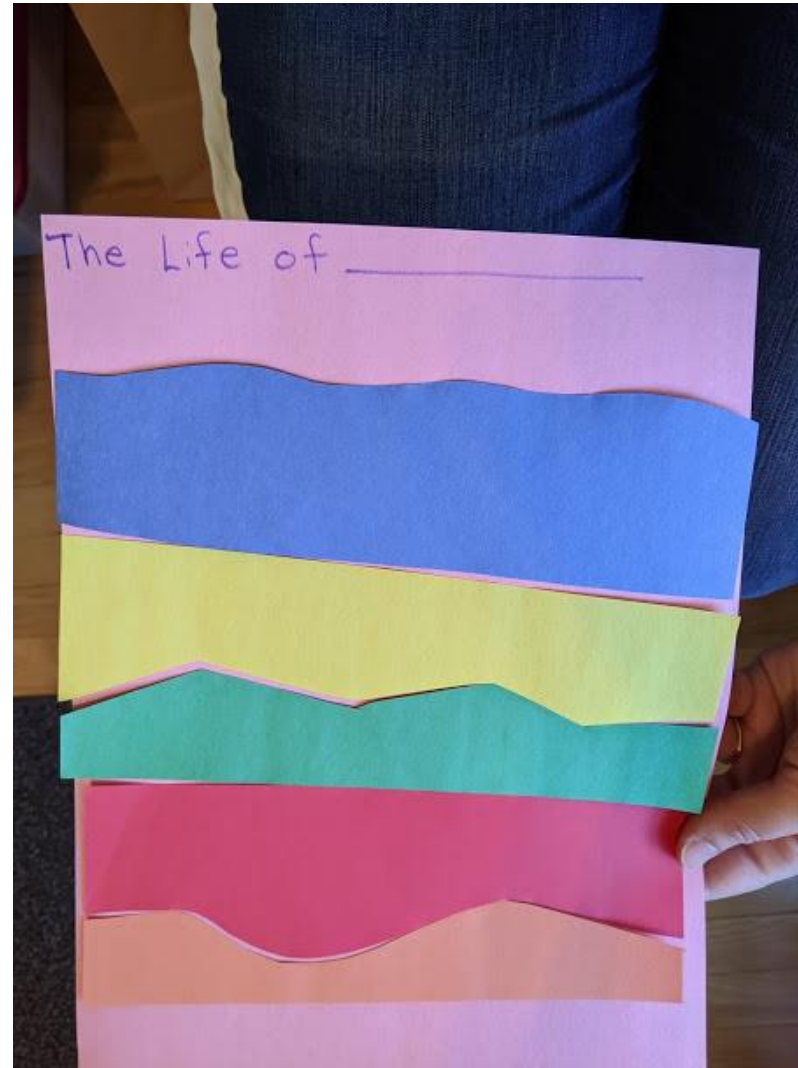
- 5 pieces of construction paper in different colors (Or white paper colored in different patterns or colors)
- Tape or glue
- Scissors
- Marker or pen

1) Cut out strips of paper in 5 different colors.

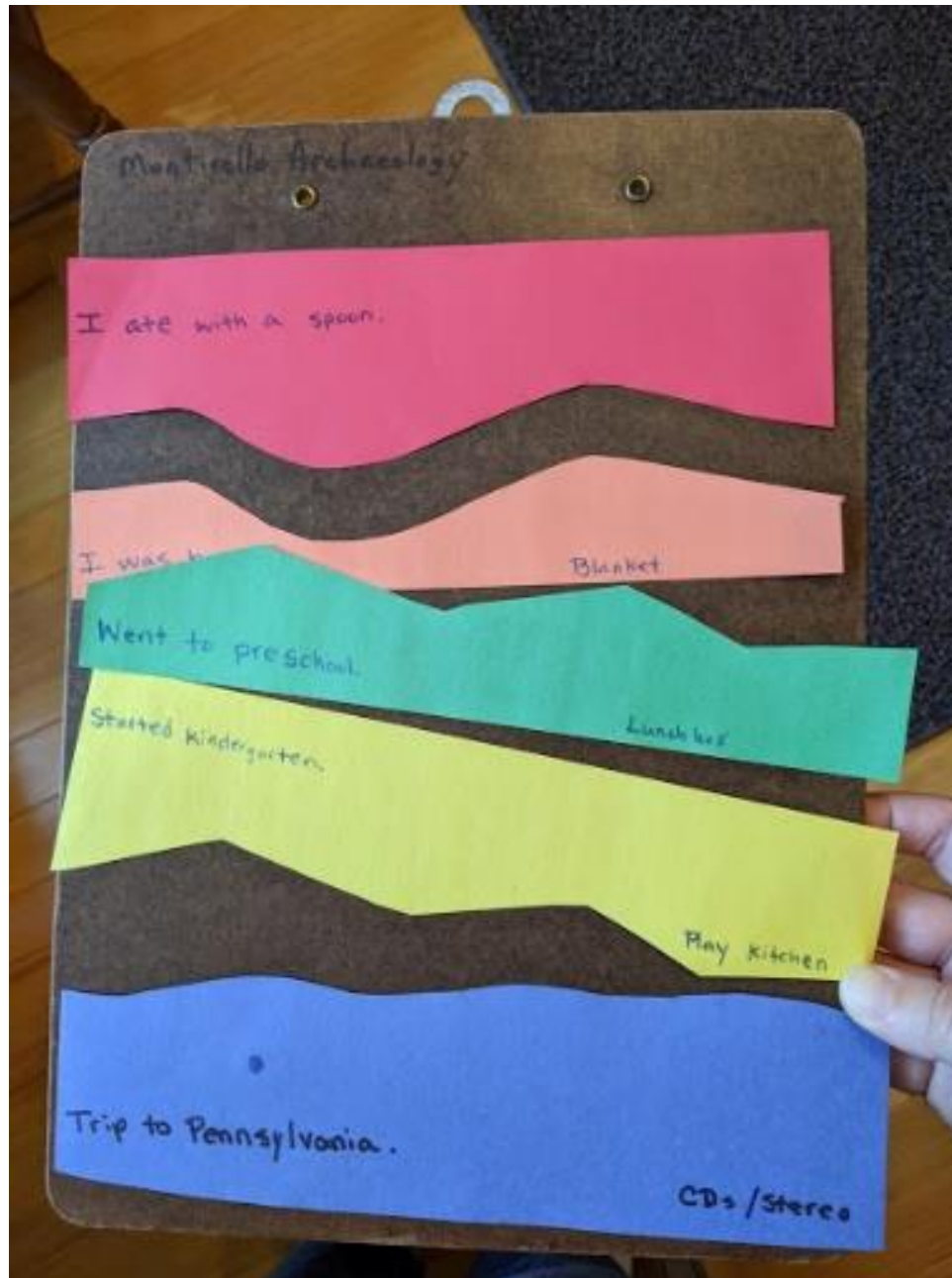
Tip: To make them inter-locking like a puzzle, cut out one shape and then overlap it with the next piece of paper as you cut.



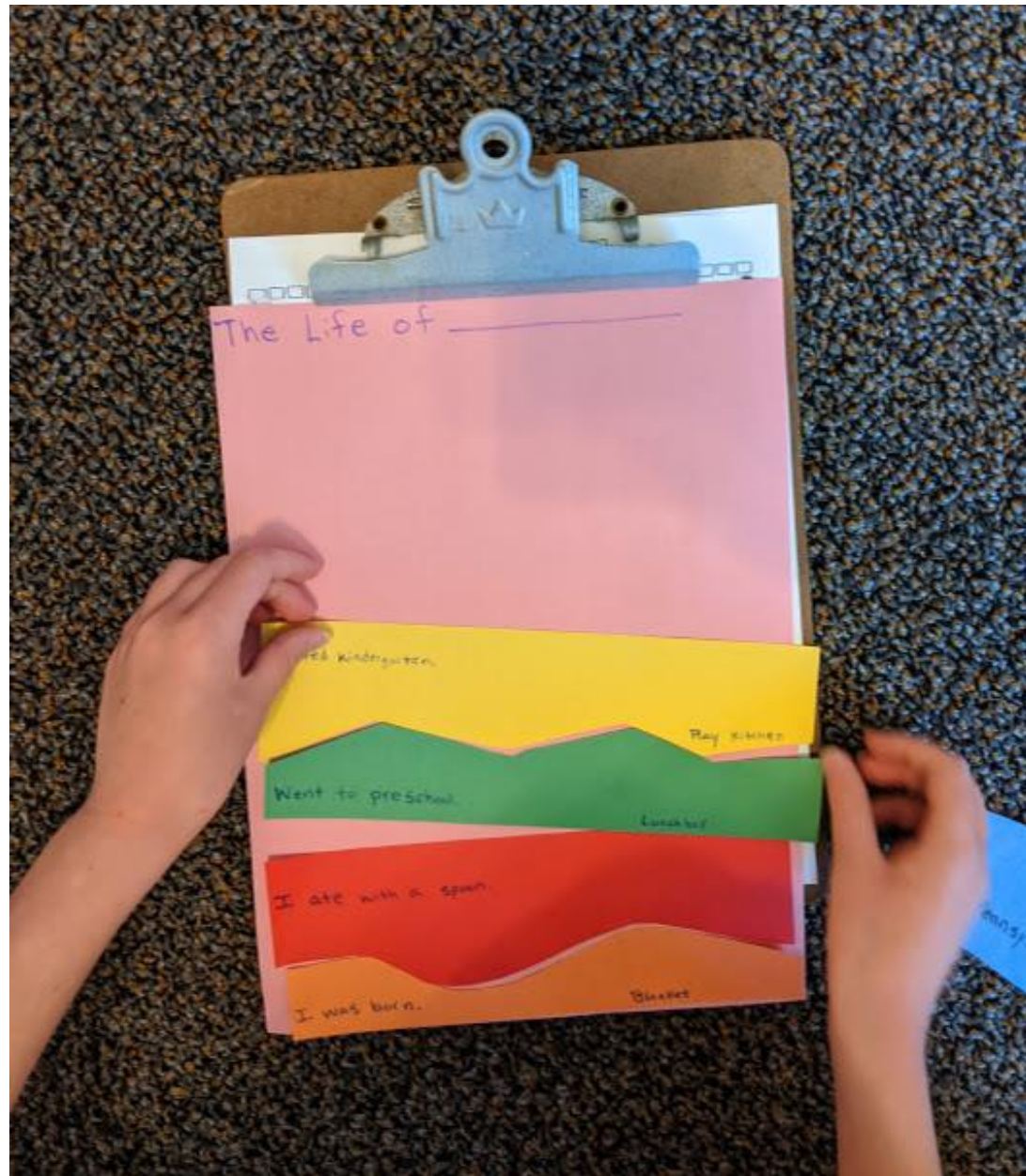
- 2) Line up your pieces on a background sheet of paper to make sure they look the way you would like. Cut to make any adjustments.



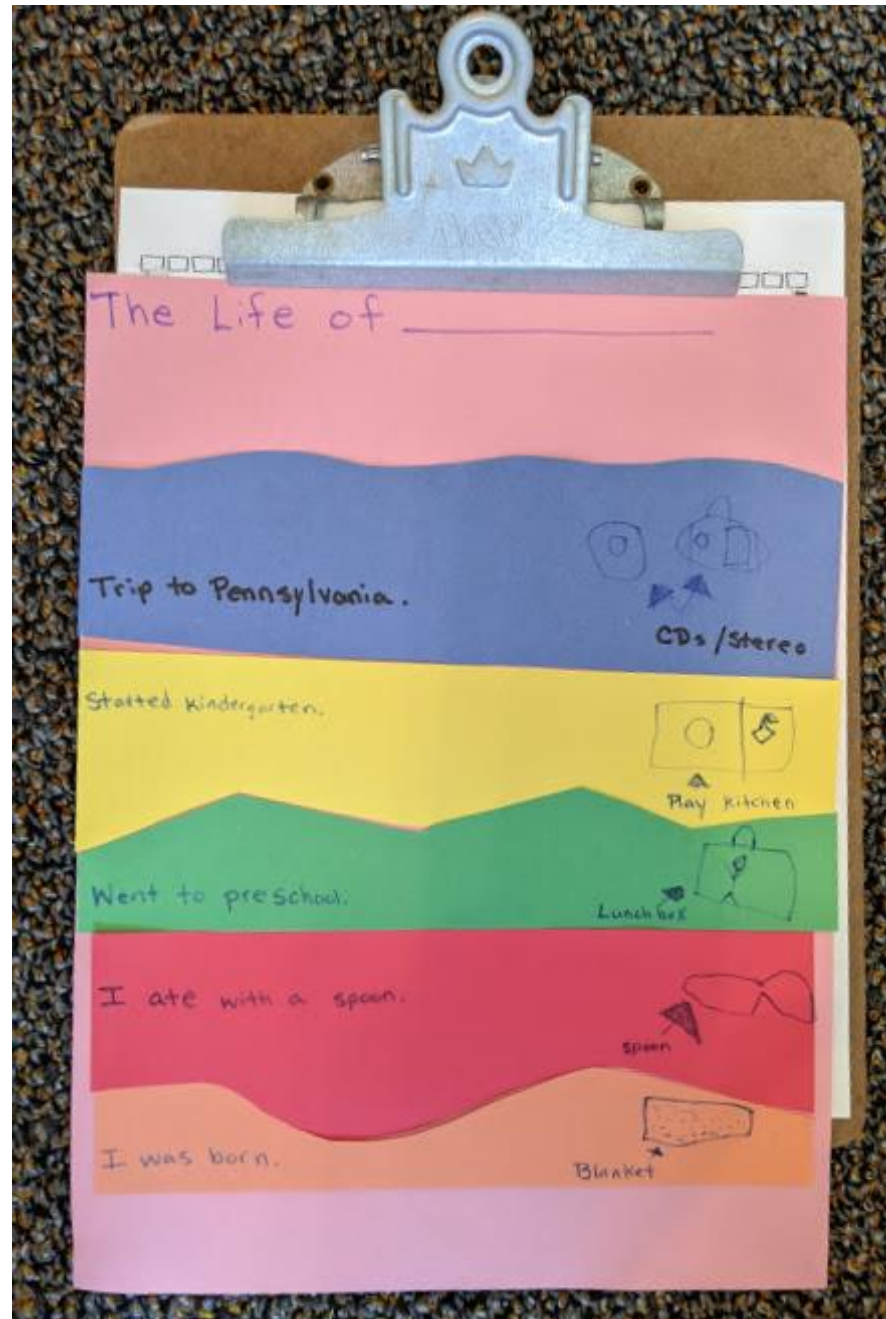
- 3) Pick an event or milestone from your life (child's life) and write it on each strip of paper. Draw an object that goes along with that event. For younger children, a grown-up can do the writing, or you can use just pictures!



- 4) Mix up the pieces and have your child put them in the correct order, with the oldest event on the bottom and the newest on the top.



5) Tape or glue down the pieces of paper. You now have an archaeological, stratigraphic timeline for your lifetime!



Build Your Own Archaeology Site Stratigraphy

Imagine that you are an archaeologist who has found lots of deposits and artifacts at a new site. Can you use the dates connected to when each artifact was made to put them in the right layer of the stratigraphy?

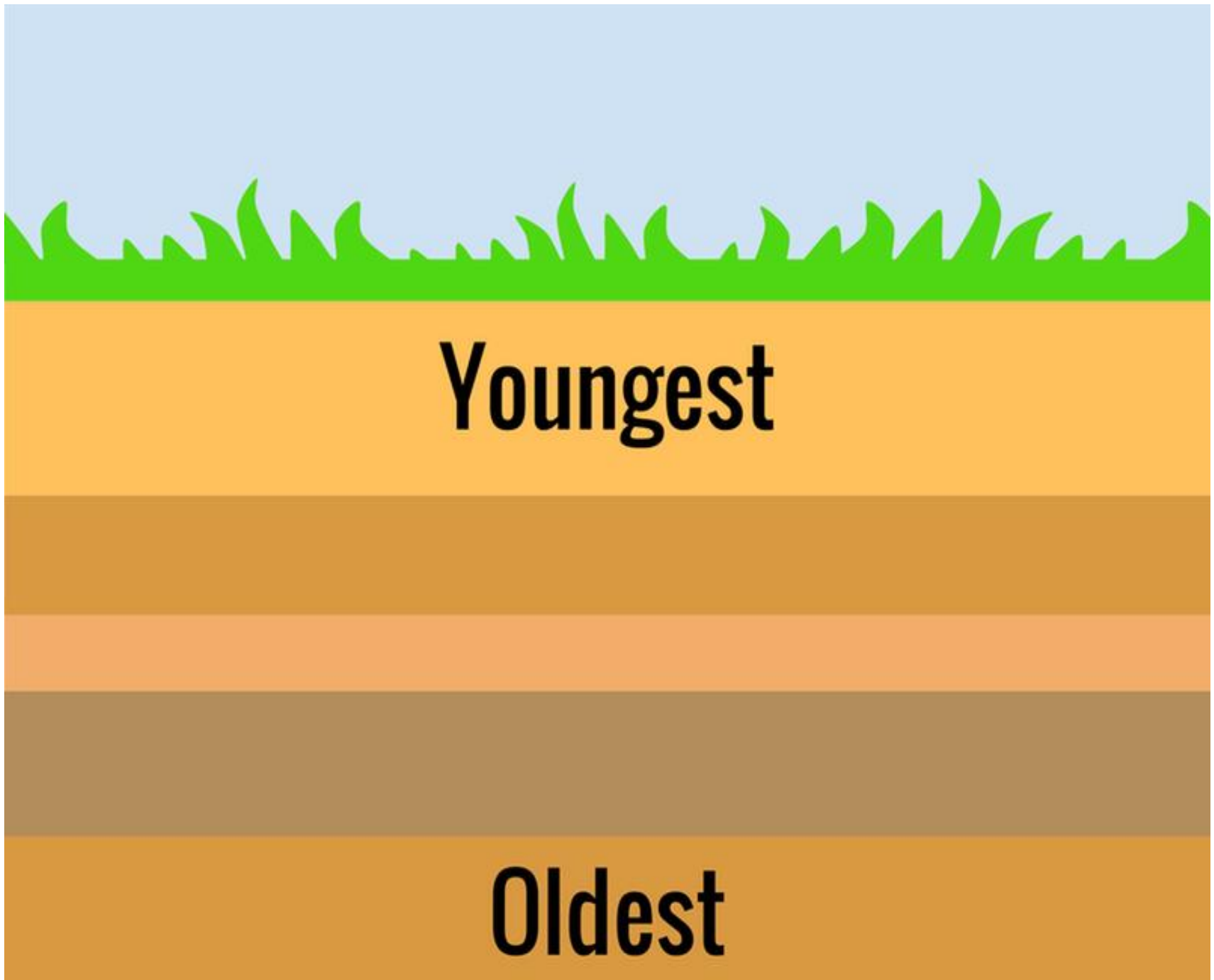
Grades 2 and up

Materials

- Print outs of pictures and layers
- Scissors
- Glue or tape

Directions:

Below is a drawing of different layers of “dirt” along with pictures of artifacts that were made at different times in history. Print out the picture with the “dirt” and the page of artifacts. Cut out the artifacts and their dates and organize them in a timeline from oldest to most recent. Then paste or tape them in the layer of dirt where they most likely would be found if they were dug up by an archaeologist.



<https://bit.ly/37juQMs>



Chinese export porcelain saucer, 1700s



Bone toothbrush head and partial handle, probably late 1700s



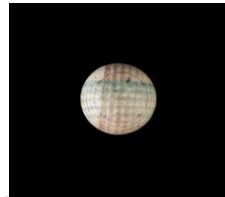
Whiteware bowl with multi-color decoration, after 1840.



Pre-1600 native American pottery



Cell phone



Mid-1800s ceramic toy marble



1899 Indian head penny



Pre-1600 stone projectile points



Plastic milk container



Brass thimble from the 1800s



Pre-1600 stone tool



Aluminum Coca Cola can



Clay tobacco pipe bowl and stem, early 1700s