

How do we know the past without written evidence?



Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Algerien_Desert.jpg

Supporting Questions

1. Without using written language, how do people communicate?
2. How was the nomads' geographic location based on needs?
3. What footprint did nomads leave behind for our discovery?

6th Grade Nomadic Life Inquiry

How do we know the past without written evidence?

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| Arkansas Standards for Social Studies | H.13.6.1 - Compare hunter-gatherer and agrarian societies (tools, shelter, diet, use of fire, cave paintings, artifacts, clothing, rituals, daily life, gender roles) |
| Staging the Question | Watch and discuss a video clip from The Croods movie. |

| Supporting Question 1 | Supporting Question 2 | Supporting Question 3 |
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| Without using written language, how do people communicate? | How were the places that nomadic people lived based on their needs? | What did nomads leave behind for our discovery? |
| Formative Performance Task | Formative Performance Task | Formative Performance Task |
| Communicate without language to create a story about an event without using language. | Highlight locations of cave paintings/drawings and compare for similarities needs (e.g. food, water, protection, tools, shelter) | Create a list of artifacts discovered and note their locations on a map by highlighting. Write a paragraph on how this footprint helped historians. |
| Featured Sources | Featured Sources | Featured Sources |
| Source A: Article - Is It Possible To Think Without Language | Source A: Symbolic Language: Prehistoric Cave Art article/video Source B: Paleolithic Cave Arts in Northern Spain 1 video Source C: Map of Europe | Source A: How Do We Learn About The Past? Source B: Ancient Civilizations for Kids focused on prehistory, radiocarbon dating, early migration with map |

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| Summative Performance Task | ARGUMENT Construct an argument with evidence addressing the compelling question, “How do we know the past without written evidence?” |
| | EXTENSION Use primary resources to write a story about what life as a prehistoric nomad was like. |
| Taking Informed Action | UNDERSTAND: Investigate regions today where war is threatening artifacts and determine what options might be available for saving them. ASSESS: Examine of a local area historic site and determine what unspoken history is explored at the site. ACT: Create a PSA that highlights the need to protect artifacts regionally or worldwide. |

Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of prehistoric nomadic life. By investigating the compelling question “How do we know the past without written evidence?” students evaluate how nomads communicated, where they lived, and how they defined their needs based on the places they lived. The formative performance tasks build on knowledge and skills through the course of the inquiry and help students develop understanding of nomadic life to compare with agrarian life. Students create an evidence-based argument about how non-written artifacts support understanding of nomadic life during prehistoric times.

In addition to the Key Idea listed previously, this inquiry highlights the following Conceptual Understanding:

D2.His.1.6-8. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

D2.His.2.6-8. Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity

D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

It is important to note that this inquiry requires prerequisite knowledge of historical events and ideas. Thus, students should have already studied map skills of longitude and latitude as well as timeline organization.

Note: This inquiry is expected to take four to six 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries in order to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “How do we know the past without written evidence?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument supported by evidence while acknowledging competing perspectives.

Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question, “How do we know the past without written evidence?” teachers may prompt students with a discussion about a video clip from the movie, *The Croods*. In the discussion, teachers may focus on students prior knowledge about prehistoric people and defining terms such as: nomads, hunter/gatherer, agrarian, evidence, and artifact.

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“Without using written language, how do people communicate?”—has students communicate without language to create a story about an event without using language. The featured sources for this question lets students see the complexities of communicating without common language. To set up this task, teachers may have students act out a word written on an index card (e.g. mountain, tree, etc.) to convey an object from prehistoric times that people may have communicated about. Students will then read an article that covers the possibility of communicating without written language which they must reflect upon. They can then be given another index card with a feeling or emotion and communicate about that feeling or emotion to their partner.

Source A: Article written by Arika Okrent - [Is it possible to think without language?](#)

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting questions asks, “How were the places that nomadic people lived based on their needs?” Students will read an article about prehistoric cave art (Source A) which includes primary source pictures of the discoverers of the cave, the content and art within the cave, as well as an interactive video that allows the students to explore the inside of the cave. Source B focuses on the El Castillo Cave. The featured sources provide students with additional materials that allow them to read about the caves and their discoveries, highlight the location of the major caves, and look for similarities and differences between these two caves. In the formative performance task, students use a labeled or unlabeled map of Europe (Source C) to locate both Spain and France, and identify the location of both the El Castillo Cave in Cantabria, Spain, (43.29 N, 3.97 W) and the Lascaux Cave in Montignac, France (45.05 N, 1.17 E), and may use lines of longitude and latitude to find absolute location of these two caves.

Source A is [Symbolic Language](#) . This is a collection of sources and video about Neanderthals and cave art that is part of Neli Todorora’s Blog.

Source B is [El Castillo Cave, Spain](#). This is a short video that tells and shows more about the El Castillo Cave in Spain.

Source C is [Map of Europe](#). This is one example of a map of Europe to help identify France and Spain and the location of the caves.

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question—“What did nomads leave behind for our discovery?”—asks students to create a list of artifacts discovered and note their locations on a map by highlighting. Students may then write a paragraph on how the things left behind helps historians understand the past. In addition to the previous featured sources, the sources for this task include an article about archeology and what artifacts we have discovered that tell us a story of the past. The second source is a website that focuses on prehistory, radiocarbon dating, early migration with map as well the transition into early writing.

Source A: Article: How Do We Learn About the Past? by George Sabo III [How Do We Learn From The Past?](#)

Source B: Website: Ancient Civilizations for Kids [Ancient Civilizations for Kids](#)

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined nomadic artifact locations, the ways nomads communicated, and how their locations met their needs.

Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this summative task, students construct an evidence-based argument using multiple sources to answer the compelling question “Is it possible to track the life of prehistoric nomads without written evidence?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- Non-written evidence supports understanding of nomadic life during prehistoric times.
- Non-written evidence supports some aspects but lacks in other parts of understanding of nomadic life during prehistoric times.
- Non-written evidence does not support understanding of nomadic life during prehistoric times.

To extend their arguments, teachers may have students provide evidence to support their claim.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by drawing on their understandings of the value of primary sources that are non-written such as artifacts, pictures, and drawing about nomadic life communication and needs. To understand the problem, students investigate regions today where war is threatening artifacts and determine what options might be available for saving them. Students can then assess the problem through an examination of a local area historic site and determine what unspoken history is explored at the site. Finally, students act by creating a PSA that highlights the need to protect artifacts regionally or worldwide.