

Archaeology in Southern Illinois – Junior level

Cahokia Mounds in southern Illinois was home to the largest prehistoric native civilization north of Mexico. Take a trip through time and discover what it was like to live in this ancient city. Along the way you will learn about archaeology, Native Americans and the great mounds that still stand today.



Steps:

1. Become an archaeologist
2. Travel back in time to Cahokia Mounds
3. Discover what is hidden underground
4. Life at the mounds
5. Sharing your history

Purpose:

When I've earned this badge I will have learned what it means to be an archaeologist. I will have visited a local archaeological site and learned how to uncover the secrets in the soil.

Step 1: Become an Archaeologist

"Do you like to dig in the dirt? Find things that are lost? Put pieces together? Figure out stories from clues? Learn about the ways people of the past lived? These are all things archeologists do – maybe you're one, too!" from website <http://www.nps.gov/archeology/public/kids/kidsFour.htm#>

CHOICES - DO ONE:

- What is an archaeologist?** Take a trip to the Center for American Archeology in Kampsville, IL and learn about the life of a Hopewellian and the scientists who study this ancient culture! For more information on their activities and programs check out their website at www.caa-archeology.org.
- Invite an archaeologist to your troop meeting.** Ask them about their job. Why did they pick this career? What do they like and dislike about their job? What is a dig and where have they been? What have they discovered?
- Go on a cookie excavation.** An excavation is used to extract artifacts out of the ground. It is impossible for archaeologists to know exactly what is underground. They must be very careful to not damage artifacts while excavating the surface. You are going on a cookie excavation. Take a chocolate chip cookie and a toothpick and see how many whole chips you can excavate from the cookie. How did you extract the chips? Can you think of

another tool that would have helped you extract the chips besides just using the toothpick? Was your cookie (or dig site) still intact after extracting the chips? Did you damage the dig site or other artifacts (chocolate chips)?

Step 2: *Travel back in time to Cahokia Mounds*

Visit the historical landmark called Cahokia Mounds in Collinsville, Illinois. Archaeologists discovered this ancient city where Native Americans lived hundreds of years ago. On this trip you will learn about the Native Americans who once lived at Cahokia.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

- Visit the Cahokia Mounds Interpretive Center in Collinsville, Illinois.**
Take a walking tour around the mounds. The three main interpretive trails are: 1. Grand Plaza-Twin Mounds-Mound 72. 2. Stockade Wall and Monks Mound. 3. Woodhenge.
Interpretive trails can be done in three ways – Loan out a cassette player at the Information Desk; at the Gift Shop purchase guide books at \$1 each, or rent out an iPod Touch unit for \$3 each. The iPod has videos and also gives an inside tour of the exhibits.

- After visiting the Cahokia Mounds Interpretive Center, walk to the top of Monks Mound, the largest mound found in North America.** How many terraces (levels) does Monks Mound have? Why is it called Monks Mound? What was the large building on top? Why was there a wall around the center of the city? What was used to make it? How many times was it rebuilt? Take a picture of yourself with your troop or family at the top of the mound or in front of the stockade wall.

- Visit the Museum inside the Cahokia Mounds Interpretive Center.**
Locate the Birdman Tablet artifact that is the symbol for this badge. Why was the figure called “Birdman”? What are the human features? What are the bird features? What markings are found on the back side of the tablet?

Step 3: *Discover what is hidden underground by looking for artifacts.* An artifact is anything that is made by or used by humans.

CHOICES: - DO ONE:

- Countless stone projectiles or arrowheads have been discovered underground.** To make one of these the Native Americans used flintknapping, which is a process of chipping away material from high silica stones like “flint” with special tools to produce sharp projectile points or arrowheads. While at Cahokia Mounds find examples of flintknapping or

participate in a flintknapping session at one of their special events, such as Kids Day or Archaeology Day.

- **Not all artifacts are discovered underground.** Wall paintings, rock art, and even graffiti are found at archaeological sites throughout the world above ground. These artifacts created by prehistoric Native Americans are called pictographs and petroglyphs and studied by archeologists to understand the beliefs, religion, and experiences of the people who created them. Make your own pictograph on a large sheet of butcher paper. Crumple it to give it a rock-like texture. Make a drawing with charcoal and use symbols or pictures (not words) to represent your life. Have your family or troop interpret your drawing and your story.

- **Peanut Butter and Jelly Archaeology** – adapted from *Expeditions into Ohio's Past*

Stratigraphy is the arrangement of materials in layers. As layers are deposited the oldest is usually on the bottom and youngest on top. By examining the materials found in the layers, archaeologists determine which artifacts are older or younger than others.

Materials: 3 slices of bread, 3 tablespoons of jam or jelly; 2 tablespoons of peanut butter, raisins, chocolate sprinkles, candy pieces (Nerds or colored sprinkles), 2 paper plates, plastic knife, plastic spoon, large clear straw, napkins

- Here we have a field somewhere in Illinois (*lay down a slice of bread*).
- Along comes a flood and leaves behind a layer of mud (*spread the peanut butter*).
- Shortly after the flood, a group of archaic people camp in the area and build a fire. Their fire leaves behind charcoal and rocks that crack from the heat (*slice raisins in half, arrange them in a circle on the sandwich, and fill in the circle with sprinkles*).
- The Archaic people depart and through time, a layer of dirt forms over the campsite (*lay down another piece of bread*).
- Eventually a Woodland group comes to the same field. These people build shelters (*gently cut small indentations or holes in the last slice of bread. These represent the holes dug to hold posts for shelters*).
- These Woodland people made a lot of pottery, but some of the pottery gets broken (*dig two small holes in the top of the bread-one on each side- and place broken candies in these holes*).
- The Woodland people leave the site and because it is so close to the river, the site floods (*spread jelly which may cause some redistribution of pottery, a situation that occurs on real sites*).
- Through time, other layers are laid down until the present and final layer of dirt covers the site (*put on top layer of bread*).

- Today, an archaeologist suspects this field was a prehistoric habitation site and conducts random core samples and surveys (*push large straws randomly through the sandwich. If you find a sprinkle or hit something, you may have found a habitation site*).
- The archaeologist conducts a test excavation at the site (*cut a square into the sandwich and remove layers*). Which habitation is older? This is similar to what happens when archaeologists examine a site.
- As a final excavation, divide and eat your sandwich, either layer by layer or all at once!

Step 4: Life at the mounds was similar in many ways to yours today. The Native Americans played games, made crafts, told stories and enjoyed time with their families. Archaeologists found evidence of games, art, and ceremonies.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

- **Atlatl Antics.** Before bows and arrows; native hunters were using a spearthrowing device called an atlatl (pronounced “at-lattle”), that extended the reach of a hunter’s arm for a more powerful shot at prey. While at the mounds ask an interpreter if they would explain how this worked. If you go to Kids Day or Archeology Day, you can try throwing a spear with an atlatl.
- **Try your hand at copper tooling.** The Cahokia Mounds was home to a copper workshop, the only known workshop from the Mississippian era! They used copper for many of their ritual artifacts and ornaments.



Make a copper picture.

- Buy thin copper metal foil sheets or rolls from your local art store.
- Find a source of illustrations of Indian designs and motifs.
- Use a worn-out stick-type ball point pen, a pencil eraser, or other dull-point objects to “draw” the designs on the copper.
- Use household scissors to cut a shape around your drawing.
- Tip. To get better results and easier tooling, make a cushion to place under the copper sheet: Place two pieces of newspaper together, fold evenly so that they fit neatly into a reusable plastic bag (like a Ziplock bag)— regular or freezer gallon size, about 10” or 11”. Seal the bag

pressing out almost all the air. The resulting packet creates just enough cushion for a padded surface under your metal foil.

- Cut out and frame your copper masterpiece!

<http://www.kidzartblog.com/2012/05/creative-kickstarts-copper-tooling/>

- **Make a vessel out of clay.** Clay was readily available on the banks of the streams that surrounded Cahokia Mounds. Make a pinch pot similar to those used by the Native Americans.

What You Will Need:

- Newspaper
- Old clothing – this will get messy!
- Tiny bowl of water
- Clay, pounded out in a chunk a bit larger than an adult fist
- Popsicle stick, spoon (anything that you can use to dig out the clay to make designs on the pot)
- A drying area

How to Make Clay Pinch Pots

- Cover the table with newspaper
- Pound out your clay to make it a bit softer
- Roll the clay into a ball using both hands on the table. (The ball should be smooth without cracks)
- Push your thumb right into the middle of the clay creating the “bowl”
- Try to keep at least ½ inch of clay for all the walls
- Smooth the surface of the clay pot as you mold it, you may need to dip your fingers in water to help smooth out the surfaces
- Use the tools to draw in any designs your like (check out this design that was found on a cup from Cahokia Mounds)



- Allow to dry
- When dried, you can apply acrylic paint on your designs
- Tip: When using water only use a tiny amount or your clay will turn back into mud!

Step 5. *Sharing your History*

You have learned how we find the secrets of people from the past through archaeology. How will we share our history for future generations?

CHOICES - DO ONE:

- Pretend that you are putting together a time capsule that will be opened in 100 years.** What would you include for archaeologists to find that you think will be of importance? What items do you think will no longer be around? Share your time capsule idea with your family or troop.
- Make a mural or poster** about your discoveries of the Native Americans at Cahokia and share it with your family.
- Go on an expedition!** Prepare your bedroom for a dig site. Make an artifact display with some of the items you discovered. Share what they tell about you with your family or troop.

Add the Badge to your Journey – It’s Your World – Change it!

This leadership journey invites you to think about being an agent of change by reflecting on past cultures. What did you learn about the power and strengths of a girl living in the Cahokian period as compared to yours? How can your strengths be used to make a difference in your community today?

Now that I’ve earned this badge, I can give service by:

- **By visiting a nursing home and helping a resident to journal the story of their life to be shared with their family and friends so their history is preserved for generations to come.**
- **Volunteering to help preserve historical buildings in my community.**
- **Teaching a Daisy or Brownie troop Native American games and crafts.**