

Role-Playing World History

Ancient Times *to the* Renaissance
Third Edition

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CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

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Introduction

What is a role-playing simulation?

Role-playing simulations attempt to put the student in the position of a person in a particular time and place. Most of the simulations involve group or individual problem solving and conflict resolution. The students are often given a character sheet, which describes the group's needs and desires, a brief description of the historical problem, and a copy of the rules of the game. Familiarity with fantasy role-playing games is a plus, but certainly not required. The individual assumes the role they choose and makes decisions as the character would make during that particular time period. No pre-set limits are placed on a particular person's choices as long as they are within the realm of what was historically possible. Because of the freedom to choose in these games, the outcome is very unpredictable. No two classes finish the simulation in the exact same way, which leads to some very interesting classroom discussions about why things turned out the way they did, what could have happened differently, and how the simulation compares with what actually occurred in history.

How are these activities different from other simulations?

Unlike many simulations that are commercially available, these games can usually be played in one or two class periods. Their open-ended nature allows for playing up to one week in some games, if time permits, but after a couple of days you will find that most of the possibilities have been exhausted and continued play will have only limited instructional value. Another key advantage to this system is the cost. This book features several good simulations for the price that many publishers charge for one. Everything you need to play these simulations can be reproduced out of this book. There are no tiresome charts to deal with. The minimal setup and cleanup time allows for maximum role-playing time. As much as possible, pieces have been kept to a minimum to make cleanup and storage easier and to keep costs down for teachers on a budget. The emphasis is on role-playing so that the student can get as much as possible out of their personal learning experience and not get tied up in the mechanics of a complicated rules system.

How are the simulations used?

The best way to use many of these simulations is at the beginning of a unit when students have little prior knowledge of the historical outcome of a particular conflict. This allows a clean slate for actions instead of a predictable imitation of history just because "That's the way it had to be." When the teacher does begin the regular instructional part of the unit, the students will automatically make comments like, "Wow! That is just like what happened in the game" or "Now I understand why they did what they did." We all know that students remember better things they do than things they heard or read

Lesson 1

Archaeology Lab: Excavate Your School!

Objectives

- To experience the methods used by professional archeologists
- To better understand the material cultures of early civilizations

Duration and Complexity

- 2 class periods
- Level 3: Average

Materials

- Scratch paper
- Pens and pencils
- A copy of the **Archeological Dig Analysis Record Sheet** for each group
- Sorting and storage bins
- Digging tools such as shovels, trowels, brushes, sifters, and dental picks

Procedure

1. Find an empty patch of dirt somewhere at your school or another location where you have permission to dig.
2. Assemble a collection of modern, ordinary objects taken out of their context, such as small toy parts, hardware items, household objects, containers, packing materials, etc. Bury these items in a very shallow amount of soil mixed up and scattered about over a small area. Tell the students that they are to role-play a team of archaeologists from the future who are attempting to interpret the twenty-first century American civilization.
3. Give a demonstration of proper excavation techniques. For enrichment have the class view a film on professional archeological excavation techniques or work with an actual archaeologist while conducting the dig.
4. Divide the students into teams of 2–6 students and distribute digging tools such as shovels, trowels, brushes, sifters, and dental picks. Distribute a copy of the **Archeological Dig Analysis Record Sheet** to each team. Have each team excavate the items, clean them up, and attempt to determine the use and relevance of each item.
5. Conduct the debriefing.

Teacher Recommendations

1. Before the simulation is conducted, it is best if students have been given a basic introduction to excavation techniques used by archaeologists.
2. Safety at the dig site is of utmost importance. Supervise carefully to make sure no one is horsing around or capable of getting hurt. It is also advisable to have parents sign a permission form or medical release before their children can participate in this activity.
3. Make sure ample time is allowed for students to clean up and store their tools and finds before the next class.
4. A second class period could be used for analyzing and identifying the objects found back in the classroom. This means that the objects would need to be cleaned up as much as possible before returning them to your room. If possible a science lab or art room could be borrowed for this portion of the lesson.
5. Make sure students carefully document their findings on the **Archeological Dig Analysis Record Sheet** for evaluation purposes.
6. If you are short on time or have limited space, you may just show a short clip of an archeologist conducting a dig and have the students dig out of the types of trays that biology teachers use for dissections. You may fill the tray with packing peanuts, beads or something else that will not make a mess in your room.
7. For enrichment, arrange a field trip to an actual archeological dig site in your area.

Debriefing

1. How did it feel to “get your hands dirty” and actually do the work of an archaeologist? Would you consider volunteering to work on a real dig or becoming a professional archaeologist?
2. How did this experience compare to the glamour with which archaeologists are portrayed in the movies?
3. Were you surprised that ordinary objects were so hard to identify when taken out of their everyday context? Do you think that archaeologists go through a similar experience when encountering a new find for the first time?
4. How are our material objects different from those an archaeologist might find when excavating an ancient culture?
5. What conclusions do you think future archaeologists might draw from examining our material objects?

