



Archaeology of a Penny

Archaeologists try to record every piece of information from an artifact, including the raw material it is made of, its source, its function, its role in society, its reflection of an individual's wealth and status, its intrinsic and relative value, and its adaption or modification.

For these reasons, even mundane objects are quite valuable to archaeologists. In fact, a piece of pottery is more valuable, in terms of information, than a gold bar. The bar only tells the archaeologists that someone had a lot of money. The pottery, however, can indicate kinship systems, trade networks, personal taste, etc.

What do you think future archaeologists are going to be able to tell about our culture from looking at the artifacts we leave behind? Find a small object in your house (a coin, a book, a toy, etc.), and see what information you can deduce. It's okay if you can't answer all the questions!

Activity

Object: _____

Description: _____

When was this made? _____

If there is a person on your object, who is it? _____

What is the significance of that person? _____

What is written on it? _____

Does your object show a building? What is the building? _____

What significance is the building? _____

What country is the object from? _____

