Assembling an Archeological Team

Assignments to hand in: Cards for Archeological Specialists, Answer Critical Thinking Questions, and “Dig” note answers

Introduction: Look at the picture below and read the following text:

Archeology, which means "the study of the ancient," is the systematic study of objects of the past. Before archeology became an area of scientific study, scholars depended mostly on written texts such as the Bible to explain the existence of ancient ruins. The "Scientific Revolution" began in the sixteenth century and inspired people to look to scientific texts instead of religious texts to explain the world. In the 1800’s, scientists from France, England, and Denmark began to carefully examine stones, soil layers, and bones they found in caves and in the earth. These scientists can be considered some of the world's first archeologists. However, most of the people who conducted the earliest archeological excavations, or digs, were poorly trained and primarily motivated by their desire to find treasure. Giovanni Belzoni, for example, was a former circus strongman whom the British government sent to Egypt in 1816 to explore the Valley of the Kings. Belzoni discovered the incredible 330-foot long Egyptian tomb of Seti by accidentally sitting on and crushing several skeletons. Rather than recognize the importance of his discovery, Belzoni's reaction was to complain about the dust surrounding him and the inconvenience of treating artifacts respectfully.

Twentieth-century archeologists work very differently. They use aerial photography to pinpoint likely sites of ancient remains and conduct careful digs to uncover artifacts, ruins, and other archeological evidence. They then systematically date and analyze their findings. Modern archeologists do not work alone, but depend upon the contributions of other specialists to analyze archeological evidence. For example, botanists study fossilized plants. Geologists help explain what the earth may have looked like in ancient times. Chemists determine the age of artifacts by using radioactive-dating methods. No one specialist can master all the information gathered at a site. Instead, several specialists work together to construct a more complete understanding of the ancient past.

Step 1: Archeologist Team - Read the description of each specialist that might work on an archeological site [Information Description Handout]. Then draw a picture of what that person might look like with bulleted traits next to
the picture. Use the Cards for Archeological Specialists to draw your pictures and traits.

**Step 2: Assembling an Archeological Team** - Read the handout: Assembling a Team of Archeological Specialists and answer the *Critical Thinking questions* after each site description.