

Bottles, Pins, and Horseshoes: Analyzing Artifacts From the Ransom Williams Farmstead Using Bloom's Taxonomy

by Carol Schlenk

Subject: Texas, American, or World History

Grade Level: TEKS are provided for 7th grade but can easily be adapted for grades 8, 10, or 11.

Rationale:

Material objects found at historical sites can be both intriguing and informative, especially when examined carefully in the classroom with students. A thorough discussion of any given artifact can be based on Bloom's Taxonomy, a classifying device used to illustrate the hierarchy of thinking levels, from simple and concrete to complex and abstract. Analyzing artifacts from the Ransom Williams farmstead using Bloom's Taxonomy allows students on all levels to exercise the complete range of critical thinking skills while appreciating the cultural significance of historical objects.

Introduction:

In this lesson, students will analyze several of the more than 25,000 artifacts discovered by archeologists on the historical Ransom Williams farmstead in central Texas. These artifacts help document the story of an African American family's transition from slavery to freedom and give a cultural snapshot of life on their farm between 1874 and 1920.

Materials:

- Access to the Internet www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/index.html
- Device for displaying documents (Interactive Whiteboard, document camera, overhead projector, etc.)
- Student Handout Worksheet, *Bottles, Pins, and Horseshoes: Analyzing Artifacts From the Ransom Williams Farmstead*
- Answer Key to Student Handout
- Printed images of Williams' Farmstead artifacts (7)
- Answer Key to artifact images

Lesson Duration: One 45-50 minute class period

Objectives:

- Define 'artifact' and 'Bloom's Taxonomy.'
- Introduce Bloom's Taxonomy and illustrate how it is used to measure learning.
- Apply Bloom's Taxonomy to the analysis of artifacts from the Ransom Williams farmstead.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) 7th Grade Social Studies:

History

1A - Identify the major eras in Texas history, including Texas in Reconstruction.

Science, Technology, and Society

20A - Compare types and uses of technology, past and present.

Social Studies Skills

21A - Use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software and artifacts to acquire information about Texas.

21B - Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

21C - Organize and interpret information from visuals, including charts.

23A - Use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

23B - Use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision.

Activity:

- Step 1 - Display the word **artifact** and ask student volunteers to offer definitions of it. Lead students to the following definition: '*anything made or altered by man.*' Ask students to volunteer examples of artifacts.

- Step 2 - Display the image of the rusty key and ask students if it would be considered an artifact. Explain that many questions can be asked about artifacts, some simple and some very complex. Explain that students will be working in small groups to answer questions about artifacts from the Ransom Williams farmstead, discovered by archeologists in central Texas.
- Step 3 - Display the Ransom Williams website (www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/index.html) and briefly describe the William's farmstead history.
- Step 4 - Explain that students will use Bloom's Taxonomy to help analyze artifacts from the Williams farmstead. Share with students that in 1956, Dr. Benjamin Bloom devised a way to measure the steps by which we learn. The steps begin with simple learning (knowledge) and move up to complex learning (evaluation). To illustrate the different levels of thinking, ask for two student volunteers. Ask one student what his name is (simple knowledge). Ask the other student whether he would rather ride the school bus home or ride home with his best friend (complex evaluation). Ask students which question was simple and which was complex and have them explain their answers.
- Step 5 - Have students get into small groups. Distribute one copy of the student handout, *Bottles, Pins, and Horseshoes: Analyzing Artifacts From the Ransom Williams Farmstead* to each group and display the handout for the class.
- Step 6 - Model the lesson: Using the rusty key image as an example, go through the chart's six Thinking Levels and corresponding Cue Words with the class. Ask students to volunteer answers to the Artifact Questions for each thinking level on the handout, using the rusty key as their artifact.
- Step 7 - Distribute artifact images to students, one image per group. Explain they are to analyze their artifact using Bloom's Taxonomy, just as the class did with the rusty key artifact. Direct students to work in their groups and write their answers on the student handout.
- Step 8 - Collect completed student handouts for assessment. Collect artifact images to use again.
- Step 9 - Display the webpage:
<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/protect/ransom/ransomkids/kids-peekinsidethecabin.html>

Have a student volunteer to search for and click on the stone dart point hidden on the fireplace hearth. Read about the dart point aloud with students, pointing out that this artifact had two applications at different times; first as a weapon, later as a talisman, or good luck charm. Explain that most cultures have examples of such “magic” objects, e.g. the Irish consider the four-leaf clover a lucky charm.

- Step 10 - For closure, ask students the following: What do the artifacts we analyzed today tell us about the life and times of Ransom Williams? Did using Bloom’s Taxonomy help you understand more about each artifact?

Modification for Special Learning Needs:

Instead of having students work independently in groups, call on individuals to fill in answers to the Student Handout. Fill in correct answers on displayed student handout and have students copy them onto their handouts.

Extension Activities:

- Explain that artifacts can have both personal and cultural significance. Have students bring personal artifacts from home and share them with the class, explaining what personal and cultural significance each artifact has.
- Display the word **metacognition**. Explain that it means thinking about one’s own thought processes, an activity we engage in every day. Activities such as analyzing an artifact or planning how to study for a test are examples of metacognition. Ask students to name more examples.

Assessment:

Correct completion of Student Handouts.

Related Websites:

Artifact collecting in Texas:

<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/public/upload/archeology-artifact-collecting-tx.pdf>

Analyzing cultural artifacts

<http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/cultural-artifact-definition-examples-quiz.html#lesson>

KLRU-TV documentary on Ransom Williams

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szyBj9FxVU8>