OI archaeologists excavating the site of Alişar Höyük, Turkey, as part of the Anatolian-Hittite Expedition (1927-32)
Think Like an Archaeologist

When archaeologists look at artifacts, they make **observations**:  
• An observation is information you can gather with your senses, such as sight, touch, or smell. Observations are facts.

Using those observations, archaeologists make **inferences**:  
• An inference is a conclusion or guess you can make based on observations. You can use observations as evidence to support your inference, but you might not be able to prove it is true.

**Take a look at this clay pot from the OI collections, for example:**

**Observation:** This pot has been blackened from heat—it has burn marks on it.

**Inference:** This pot was used for cooking.

You can practice these skills at home or in your neighborhood! While you might not find any mysterious, ancient artifacts, that’s okay! Archaeologists still use observation and inference even when they find artifacts that they can identify—there is a lot more to most artifacts than simply naming them.

**Practice Thinking Like an Archaeologist!**

**Step 1: Choose your object.** (Tip: Choose something familiar that you might not have ever looked at closely, such as a remote control, toothbrush, or headphones.)
Step 2: Sketch your object.
Don’t worry about drawing perfectly; the point is to slow down and really look at your object. You can use the space to the right, or draw on another paper.

Step 3: Make observations. Use these categories as a start, then write any additional observations you make. Did you see anything you’ve never noticed before?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shape or Form</th>
<th>Color(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texture</td>
<td>Pattern(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbol(s)</td>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Observations

Step 4: Make inferences. What can you infer about your object, based on your observations? Use these questions to help you start thinking about your inferences.

What is it?_____________________________________________
Who would use this?_____________________________________
How was it made?_______________________________________
Is this something many people would have?_________________
Where would someone use this?___________________________

What other inferences can you make?

Step 5: Reflect. What questions do you still have? How could you learn more?
Megiddo is an ancient site in Israel where people lived for thousands of years. Over time, people built on the ruins left behind by previous groups, forming a man-made hill that archaeologists call a **tell**. When archaeologists excavate a tell, they look at the site's **stratigraphy**—all the different layers of stuff left behind. Each layer, or **stratum**, shows a different part of the history of this site. By studying the stratigraphy of a site, archaeologists can see how things changed over time.

Use this scavenger hunt to explore clay lamps at Megiddo. For each time period, find the lamp in our database, then sketch it, then write the stratum where it was found.

Start at the bottom—we’ve done the first one as an example.

**How to search for lamps:**
1. Go to [oi-idb.uchicago.edu](http://oi-idb.uchicago.edu).
2. Type the registration number for the object (Example: **A23964**).
3. Press Submit.

**What is a clay lamp, anyway?**
Clay lamps were used for light. The basin was filled with oil, and a wick was laid in the oil with one end on the spout. The wick was lit like a candle.

**Stratigraphy of Megiddo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Registration Number</th>
<th>Stratum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron Age</td>
<td>A28336</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Bronze Age</td>
<td>A28299</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Bronze Age</td>
<td>A20884</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Bronze Age</td>
<td>A23964</td>
<td>Stratum 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Today?**

- Sketch what a lamp looks like today.

**Future?**

- What might a lamp look like in the future?

**Notes:**
- Burning lamp image by Arne Hückelheim - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12395926