What's Left Behind?
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In this week’s session, campers dug up artifacts that have been left behind and explored what these items tell us about our past and present. They learned how archaeologists investigate old sites and fossils inside them to examine how people lived long ago. In addition, they learned how materials can be recycled and composted to cut down on waste. Campers also took field trips to the Academy of Natural Science and The Penn Museum, conducted their own digs, and told stories using trash as inspiration.

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Fossil Cast Activity

In this activity, campers made replicas of plastic dinosaurs to demonstrate how real archaeologists create cast models of their findings. Campers pressed their artifacts into clay to create an impression and covered them with a plaster mixture. They learned that this activity is often done when archaeologists find fossils during an excavation. Because this process can take a very long time, plastic molds are frequently made so that they can be studied without interrupting the excavation. Campers saw replicas like these at the Penn Museum as they observed models of various animal and human bones!

Make Your Own Cartouche

A cartouche (pronounced kar-toosh) is a hieroglyph nameplate. Campers were able to make their own cartouche just like Egyptian pharaohs, kings, and queens! The cartouche is oval shaped and has three knots attached to the bottom bar, which symbolizes “all that the sun encircles.” Until the translation of the Rosetta Stone in 1822, we were not able to read hieroglyphs! Now, people are able to read what the ancient Egyptians left behind in their tombs. Campers learned that hieroglyphs are not the same as English letters, but they picked symbols that had sounds close to the letters of their own name. The final result was a cartouche similar to those left by the ancient Egyptian royalty!
Penn Museum Field Trip

Campers continued their investigation of different cultures as they explored the Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. In the “Human Evolution” exhibit, campers learned about the origins and development of human beings. They also enjoyed comparing the casts of fossil bones with their own to see how the body has changed over time. In “Imagine Africa”, campers were asked their views on the continent and its people. In addition, they considered how religion, art, science and geography have all acted to shape African culture. Campers also surveyed artifacts from Israel, gazed at the impressive Chinese Rotunda and explored the museum’s Mediterranean galleries that house a variety of sculpture, mosaics and pottery. Finally, campers were treated to a performance by the Spice Route Ensemble whose beautiful music originated from countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Greece.
Create Your Epitaph

Humans have many different ways of remembering and honoring people who have passed, like pyramids, statues, portraits, and headstones. Campers were instructed to write their own life stories, about their friends, family, interests, and future goals.

Some Discovery Camp epitaths:
"I like Skylanders 3 and 4. I like the color crimson. I like YouTube channels." -Andrew
"I love to swim. I am on a swim team. My favorite color is purple. My favorite animal is a fish because I like to swim." -Claire
"I like the color blue. My favorite sport is pool. My favorite animal is a chipmunk." -Audrey Ling

Walking With Dinosaurs 3D

This week, campers had the opportunity to watch a 3D move about dinosaurs! The movie is set in Alaska and follows a dinosaur from its birth to adulthood, through multiple challenges. First, the baby dinosaur is picked up from its nest by a predator and needs to be saved by its mother! Because the dinosaur and its herd are vegetarian, they must migrate during the winter. The herd comes across a giant frozen lake, and must cross without breaking through the ice. Fossil evidence shows that sometimes entire herds would die this way. After crossing the frozen water, the dinosaur must help its herd fight off another predator, the tyrannosaurus! While the dinosaurs are especially vulnerable against a violent predator when they are alone, they have an advantage when they fight back as a group. The herd was able to save its members and continue the migration.
Campers painted just like the earliest humans did this week! Cave paintings are what prehistoric humans left behind to share about their lifestyle. Because they made their paints about of vegetation, clay, and charcoal, their paintings are primarily black, brown, and red. The earliest art shows herds of animals, as well as human hunters. To imitate time travel, campers laid under their tables and crumpled their brown paper. Using their fingers, they painted stories to be remembered just like their early human ancestors did! Afterwards, they hung the paintings up around the classroom so that it resembled a cave.
Trash Life Reconstruction

Studying what people have thrown out can tell us a lot about how we’ve lived. Many of the items archaeologists find are actually pieces of trash discarded and buried under layers of material. These artifacts leave important clues about what people ate, made, and did in their everyday lives. Campers tried to infer this kind of information as they sorted through a bag of trash containing food packages, clothing, broken toys, and store receipts. While examining the items, campers discussed what they knew about the people who owned the garbage and created stories to explore how they lived.

Time Capsule

A time capsule is another way to tell people of the future about the present. Campers made their own time capsules to send to themselves later in life! They each brought one object that represents themselves, like a tennis ball. Then, they wrote a letter explaining that they are writing from The Franklin Institute and talked about their friends and hobbies! These time capsules will be a fun trip to the past when they are opened years from now.
Campers learned all about the excavation process and conducted their own archaeological dig in science park. Campers began by simply looking at a 10x10 dig site to observe features like sand, gravel and vegetation. They donned safety goggles and took turns using shovels to uncover various artifacts. Campers then drew the site on graph paper so that they could document everything they found. They also learned the difference between a paleontologist, who studies dinosaur fossils; a looter who does not document his artifacts, and an archaeologist who survey sites to learn about human activity in the past.
This week’s guest speaker, Dr. T, educated campers about a number of materials that are often left behind. Plastics, metals, rocks and concrete all play a vital role in our lives. Campers discussed how these materials are used in buildings, sensors, weights and many other products we rely on everyday. To demonstrate their prevalence, Dr. T showed campers frisbees, golf balls, glue and CD’s which are all made out of plastic. He also taught campers how the seven recycling symbols correspond to various types of plastics like Polyethylene and Polypropylene. Although often ignored, these numbers offer important information about the chemicals used in the plastic, how bio-degradable the plastic is as well as it’s overall safety.

In this activity, campers tried to match fingerprints just as forensic scientists do in the lab. Each camper made a fingerprint on a sheet of paper that was then hung on the wall. Campers then made a second print on a square of paper. These were shuffled and distributed around the room so that each camper had one of their classmate’s prints. One by one campers came up to the sheet of paper and tried to match the fingerprint they had with one on the wall. Counselors taught campers that our fingerprints are formed when we are inside our mothers’ wombs. These ridges on our skin are completely different- no two people have the same fingerprints. Police use them to solve crimes because they are one of easiest ways to identify a person! Campers continued investigating as they made invisible ink drawings and letters. After counselors diluted lemon juice so that it was very hard to see, campers drew images or wrote stories using a Q-tip. Campers kept their secret codes and messages hidden until they placed their papers over heat. In a process called oxidation, compounds in the lemon juice broke down and caused the drawings to turn brown.
Our Mission

With the goal of exciting children about science and nurturing their spirit of inquiry, we challenge each camper to take a closer look at our world and see that science is a part of everything. No matter where science fits into their future plans, the scientific discoveries that campers make at Discovery Camp will enhance their lives forever.

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