

EDUCATIONNAL NOTEBOOK FOR STUDENTS IN SECONDARY 1-3

Digging in the Future – Time Capsule

What is it?

You will soon be visiting **Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex** with your students. Digging in the Future – Time Capsule is a 90-minute interactive workshop in which your students become archaeologists of the future. The activity has two parts.

- First, the students visit the Crypt, an archaeological site of major importance, where they will learn about multiple **historical periods** simultaneously. The students will explore the **methods of archaeology**, try to locate artifacts, and learn more about Montréal’s various historical periods.
- Next, in the workshop, they will assemble a time capsule representing our modern era to help future archaeologists better understand our society.

This activity is geared primarily toward **Social Sciences** courses in the Québec Education Program. It also covers aspects of **academic and career guidance**.

This guide offers suggestions for preparing your students for their visit. It also contains useful educational links for when you return to the classroom.

For more information on the Digging in the Future workshop, please visit our [website](#).



To prepare your students for their visit to the museum, we suggest three optional activities.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

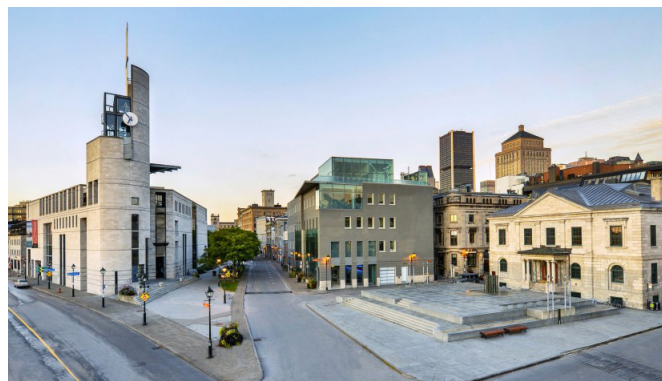
ACTIVITY 1 A digital preview of Pointe-à-Callière

Learn a little about Pointe-à-Callière before you get here. It's more than just a museum. It's an archaeological site and, historically, a place where Indigenous peoples had gathered for centuries, even before the founding of Ville-Marie, which would become Montréal.

- A** Watch our [promotional video](#), which offers a preview of the Digging in the Future workshop.
- B** Listen to our [Raconter Montréal](#) podcast (in French). Museum experts relate fascinating stories about Montréal's surprising past to actor **Émilie Bibeau**.
- C** Watch an [interview with Pointe-à-Callière specialists](#) to learn about the job of being an **archaeologist** (in French).
- D** And why take a [virtual tour](#) of the museum before you arrive.

THEMES COVERED

- The Metropolis and Geographical Heritage (Secondary 1 and 2)
- Periods from the History of Québec and Canada program (Secondary 3)



Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex. Photo: Caroline Bergeron

**SHORT
ACTIVITY**

ACTIVITY 2 Key moments in Montréal's history

This is a fictional cross-section of the ground under Montréal. The deeper layers are the oldest, while those closest to the surface are more recent. This is what archaeologists call a stratigraphy.

On the stratigraphy, have students:

- place the following periods in order, from 1 to 4.
 - English rule
 - New France
 - 19th century
 - Indigenous occupation of the territory
 - occupation du territoire par les Premières Nations
- place the artifacts in the appropriate layers.
- To help them, you can suggest that the students learn more about the objects on the site [ArchéoBazar](#).

During the workshop at the museum, students will get a chance to **learn more about the concept of layered strata, which archaeologists call the stratigraphy, and about these historical periods.**

THEMES COVERED

- The Metropolis and Geographical Heritage (Secondary 1 and 2)
- Periods from the History of Québec and Canada program (Secondary 3)



FIRE!

To learn more about the **great fire of 1852**, which destroyed one-fifth of the city—1,200 homes—you can read about it on the Ville de Montréal’s [Mémoires des Montréalais de la Ville de Montréal](#), site (in French).

The [same website](#) also has a story about the **fire of April 10, 1734**, which forced 300 people from their homes. Or listen to [episode 2 of our podcast Raconter l’histoire](#) to learn more about the controversial trial of Marie-Angélique, an enslaved person of African descent found guilty of having started the fire. Was she wrongly condemned to death?



ACTIVITY 3 Lead a discussion with your students:
History and archaeology—what’s the difference?

The museum’s official name is *Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex*.

What is the difference between archaeology and history in your view?

Here are a few questions you can use to gauge your students’ prior knowledge. Feel free to ask these questions directly to the whole class or have them answer individually in writing.

THEMES COVERED

- Academic and career guidance content (ACGC), including Knowledge of the World of Work
- Interpret social phenomena using the historical method
 - in History and Citizenship Education (Secondary 1 and 2)
 - in History of Québec and Canada (Secondary 3 and 4)

What is archaeology?

A science that studies the past by analyzing artifacts found in the ground that have been left behind by our ancestors.

What is history?

A science that studies the past primarily through written documents left by our ancestors, and through objects of material culture.

How far back can history go?

To the beginnings of writing, which developed at different times and places on earth.

And archaeology?

Back to prehistory, the very earliest traces of the first humans.

EXTRA What is the difference between an archaeologist and a paleontologist?

Archaeologists search for artifacts left behind by humans, while paleontologists are interested in the remains of living things that lived in the past (fossils).

RELATED BUT DIFFERENT FIELDS

Archaeology and history are similar in that they both explore and try to tell the story of humanity's past. While they occasionally overlap, they generally do not use the same sources or research methods. Archaeologists primarily study artifacts from the ground that our ancestors used and left behind. Historians work mostly by consulting written sources and documents but also objects left by past generations over the course of history. In short, history and archeology are complementary fields that nourish one another.

The ideal way to reconstruct the past would be to find, in one place, objects AND documents that describe the same period. This is what you will be doing at the museum, by assembling **time capsules**.

SEVERAL WORDS YOU WILL HEAR DURING YOUR VISIT

Artifact

Any object made by humans and recovered during a dig.

Ruin

An old building, or rather what remains of it.

Time capsule

Watertight and durable container that has been buried or hidden to preserve items from a given period and meant to be opened in the future.



HISTORY CAPSULE

The idea of the time capsule is not new. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the world's oldest literary works, dating from the 18th century BCE, begins with instructions for finding a copper box containing a tale written on a stone tablet.



Photograph: Alain Vandal, © Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal History and Archaeology Complex, 2017/3-76

We suggest you do a short session to review certain themes and terms introduced during your visit to Pointe-à-Callière.

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

ACTIVITY 4 What we leave behind for future generations

Pointe-à-Callière’s Digging in the Future – Time Capsule workshop introduced your students to the concepts of the time capsule and of sending information about the present into the future. Food for thought about the traces—and garbage—we leave behind on earth. So why not have your students assemble an actual time capsule with their own objects as a way of thinking about their ecological footprint.

- A** First, have your students select an object from their everyday life that is representative of our time. Each student can bring a real item to class, or, if it is valuable, a photograph of it.
- B** Then, have them write a short text about their object that explains its importance. The text should answer three questions:
1. What the object reveals about our time.
 2. Why it is important.
 3. Something they hope will happen by the time the capsule is opened (e.g., single-use plastic containers are no longer used).
- C** Have a discussion with your students about their vision of the future and of the environmental impact of the objects they have chosen for the time capsule. Here are a few ideas for initiating and supporting the discussion.

Will the objects in the capsule last a long time?

Not all materials have the same life span.¹ While some materials, such as plastics, aluminum, ceramics, and glass might last a long time, others, such as wood, paper, and wool, degrade more quickly. These are important considerations in selecting objects to include in a time capsule,²

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but also when it comes to making more environmentally friendly choices today.

Could we replace your object by other, more durable objects, or do without it all together?

Could plastic items be replaced by greener material, such as wood? Is the object repairable? How does the durability of today’s objects compare to those of the past (e.g., smart phone vs. rotary-dial phone)?

In short, the idea is to think about ways to reduce the ecological footprint created by our many single-use objects that are difficult to repair and have limited lifespans. To inspire your students, here are some solutions suggested by teen journalists at UnPointCinq climate action media.³ The students may even want to edit their texts following this discussion.

1. futura-sciences.com, “[Quelle est la durée de vie des déchets?](#),” Consulted on February 18, 2022.

2. lapresse.ca, “[Encapsuler nos souvenirs de la pandémie](#),” Consulted on February 18, 2022.

3. unpointcinq.ca, “[Laboratoire des jeunes journalistes en environnement](#),” Consulted on February 18, 2022.

D To finish, place all of the objects (or photographs) and texts from the class into a capsule, to be opened at a future date. You and your students can bury it, or you can simply store it somewhere for safekeeping.

IDEA If the capsule is created at the start of high school, you might suggest opening it with them at their graduation dance.



Unusual time capsules

FOLLOW STEVE JOBS' EXAMPLE

Steve Jobs buried his own time capsule in 1983. It was found 30 years later. No, it didn't contain millions of dollars. It did contain a Rubik's Cube, one of the earliest models of computer mouse, and several beers for those who found the capsule.

FOR SCIENCE!

In 2017, scientists buried a summary of current knowledge of geology, biology, and technology on an island near the Arctic Circle. The time capsule is capable of remaining in the ground for over a half a million years. It contains samples of human, rat, and apple DNA, a bee in resin, seeds, and about 300 tardigrades, microscopic "water bears" that can survive even in the vacuum of space.

Other resources

Add a second activity to your visit.

DIGGING IN THE FUTURE and in Time?

Workshop offered by the Marguerite-Bourgeoys Museum, in combination with the Pointe-à-Callière *Time Capsule* workshop.

Find out more on the [website of the Marguerite-Bourgeoys Historic Site](#).



The Digging in the Future program was produced through funding from the gouvernement du Québec.



ACTIVITY 2 Key moments in Montréal's history

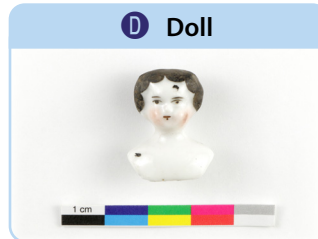
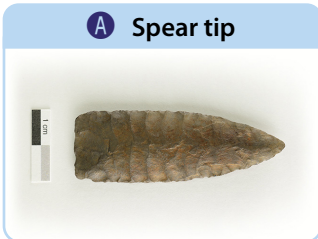
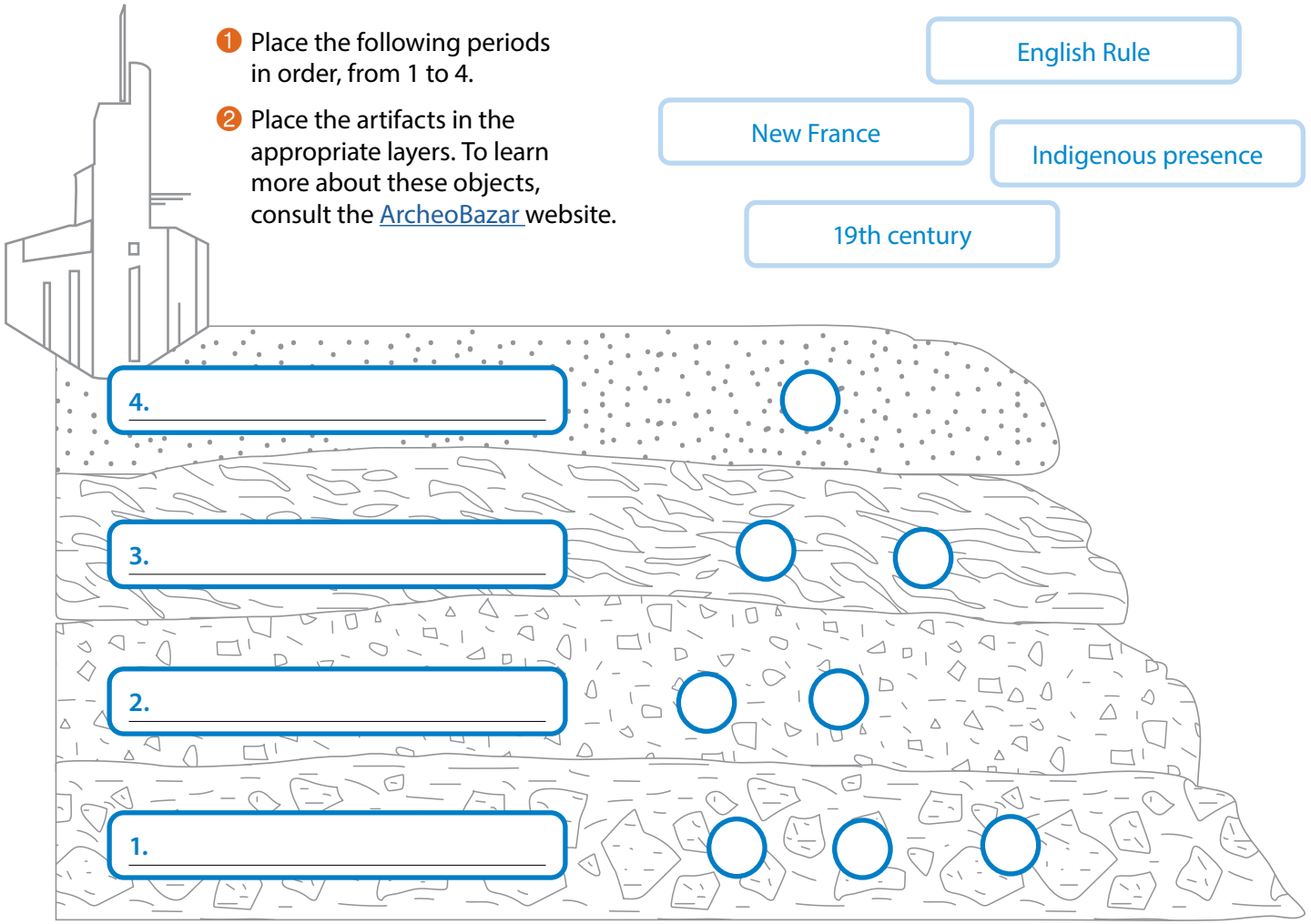
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- 2 Place the artifacts in the appropriate layers. To learn more about these objects, consult the ArcheoBazar website.

English Rule

New France

Indigenous presence

19th century



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