

BURKE WORK

WHAT WE DO
BEHIND THE GLASS
IN

ARCHAEOLOGY

CREATED BY MORGAN STEWART

This activity book was created to partially fulfill the requirements for the degree of
Master of the Arts.

Thank you to my supervisory committee, Meena Selvakumar, Katie Anderson,
Andy Clark, and Siri Linz.

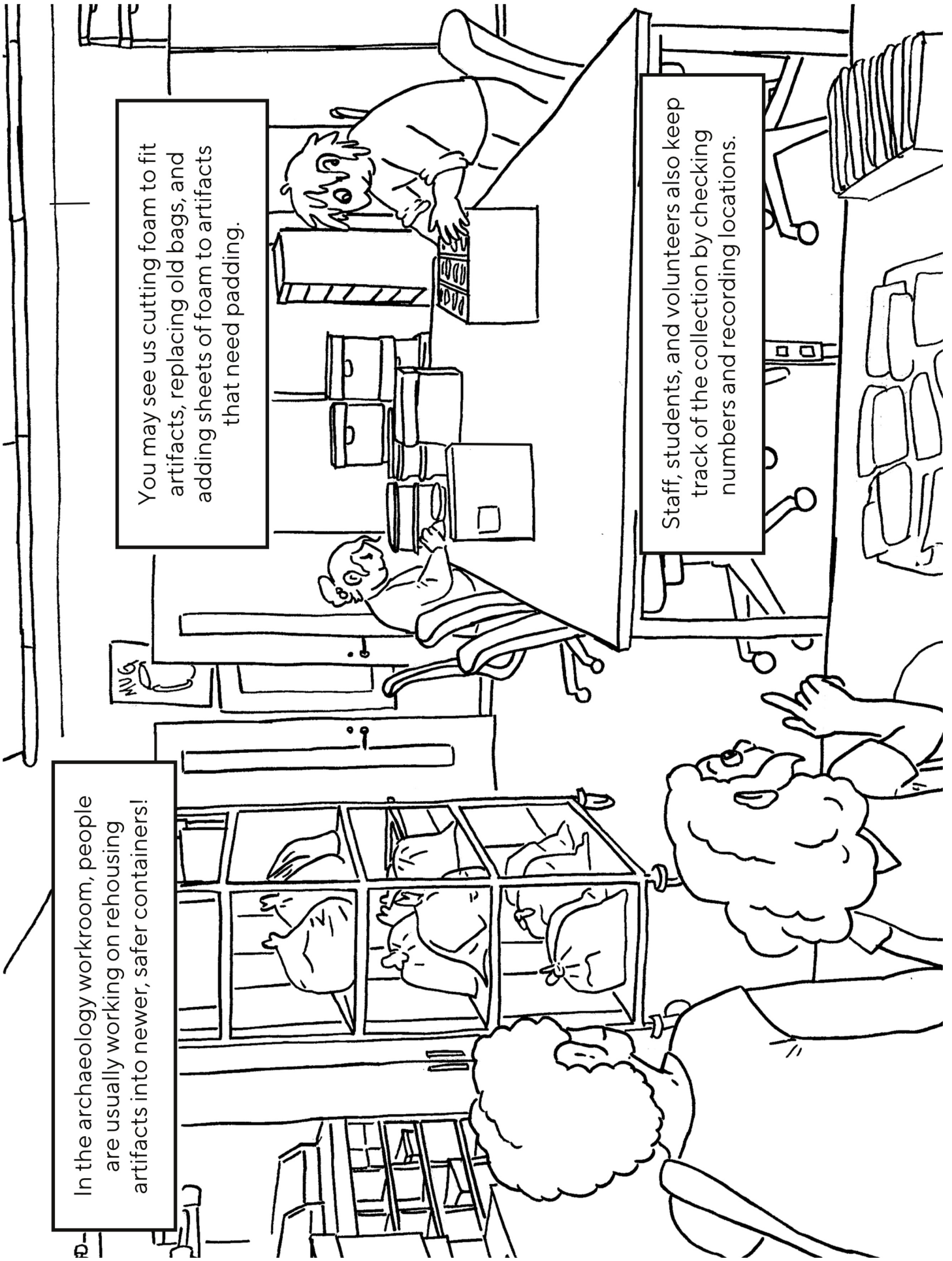
The research performed for this book was made possible through the
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Thank you also to Andy Clark, Caleb Stockham, Angela Reed, and Sarah
Winkowski for their assistance in formatting and editing.

In the archaeology workshop, people are usually working on rehousing artifacts into newer, safer containers!

You may see us cutting foam to fit artifacts, replacing old bags, and adding sheets of foam to artifacts that need padding.

Staff, students, and volunteers also keep track of the collection by checking numbers and recording locations.





Most archaeology done in Washington State happens at construction sites.

Before construction starts, archaeologists look for clues or evidence that people may have left behind in the past.

Archaeologists do background research using historic documents, archaeology already done in the area, and talking with Indigenous communities. If the construction cannot move and will hurt the archaeological site, the archaeologists may need to dig.

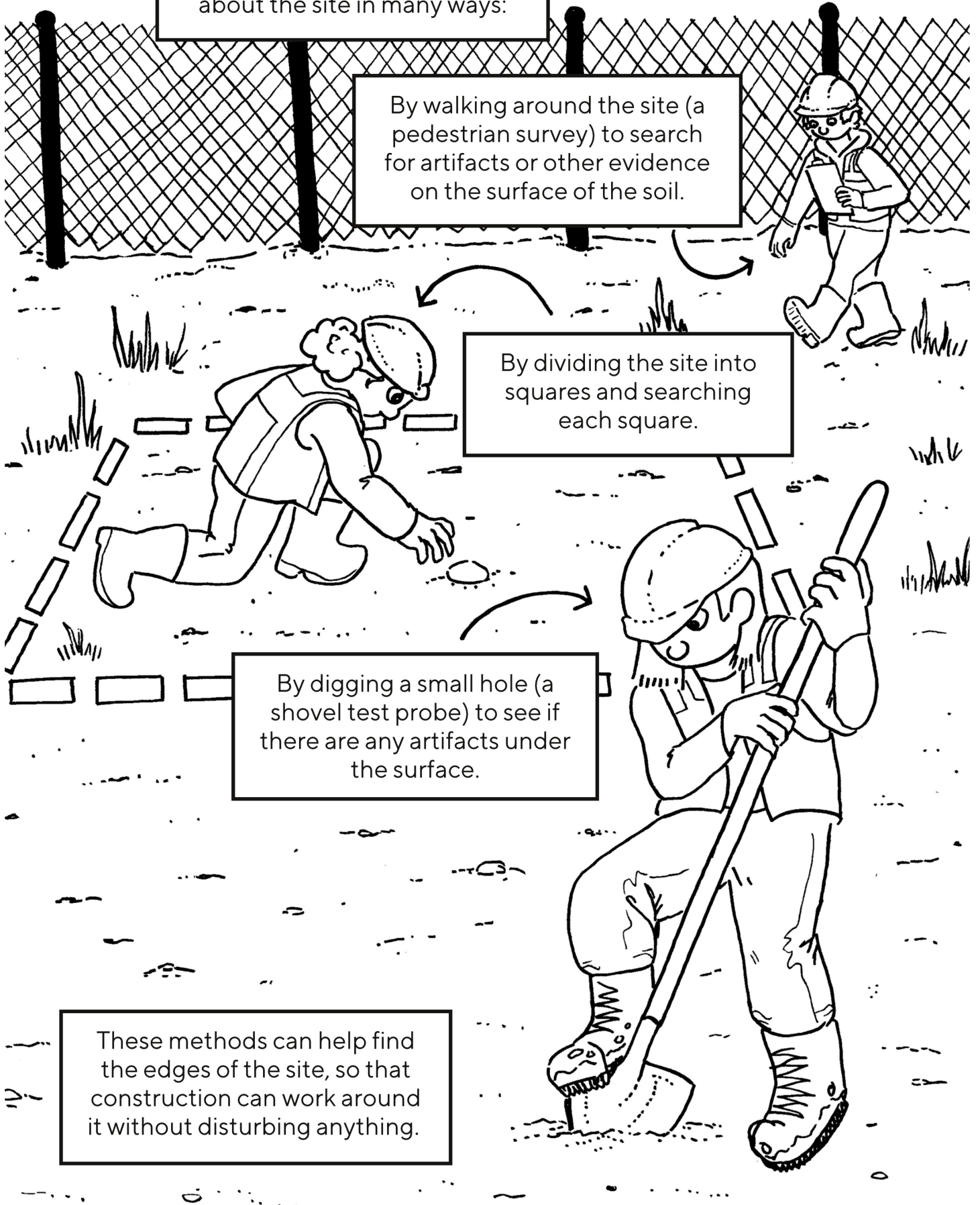
Archaeologists learn more about the site in many ways:

By walking around the site (a pedestrian survey) to search for artifacts or other evidence on the surface of the soil.

By dividing the site into squares and searching each square.

By digging a small hole (a shovel test probe) to see if there are any artifacts under the surface.

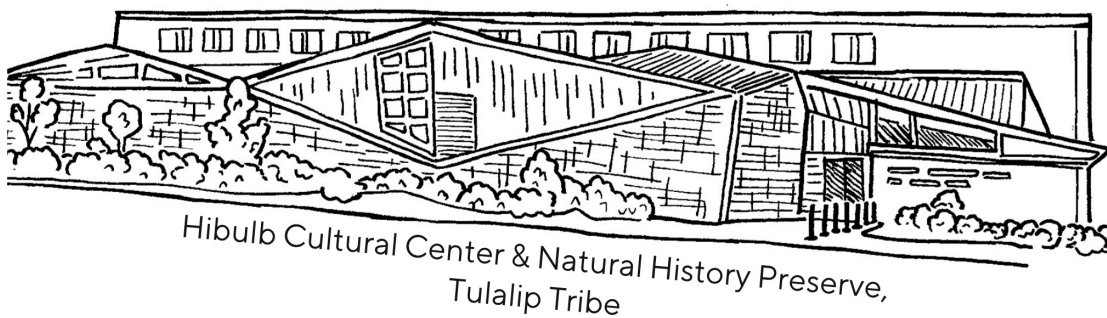
These methods can help find the edges of the site, so that construction can work around it without disturbing anything.



Because most of the archaeological artifacts in Washington State are the belongings of Native Americans living here today, archaeologists work with the Tribal Nations.

Many of the belongings the Burke Museum has in its collection are held in trust for Tribal Nations. The Burke is only a temporary caretaker.

Many Tribal Nations already have museums and others are building them.



Imagine your belongings were found by archaeologists in the future. How would you want them to be treated?

Because a lot of these collections were brought to the museum decades ago, they have not been stored properly and need better storage.

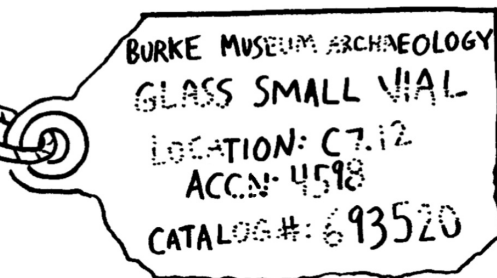


after 50 years...

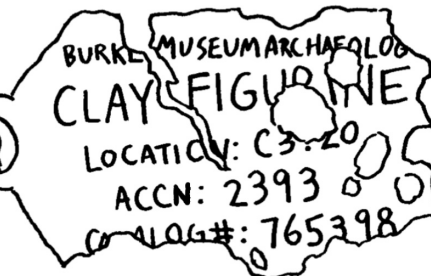
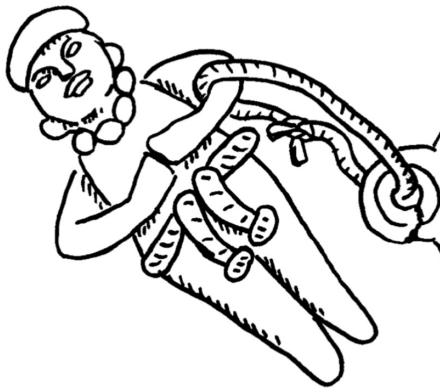


The bags they were stored in have degraded and the labels have deteriorated. We have learned a lot about how materials wear out over time and now have better materials, called archival materials, to help us care for the collection.

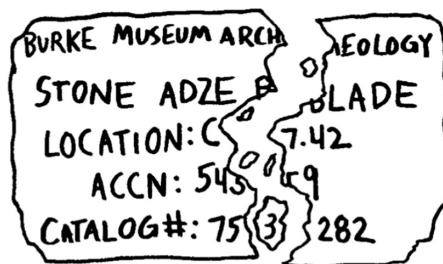
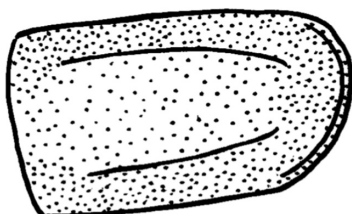
Some of the old collections were labeled with materials that have broken down over time, making them very hard to read.
Can you figure out what the old labels say and relabel the artifacts?



BURKE MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGY
Object:
Location:
ACCN:
Catalog Number:

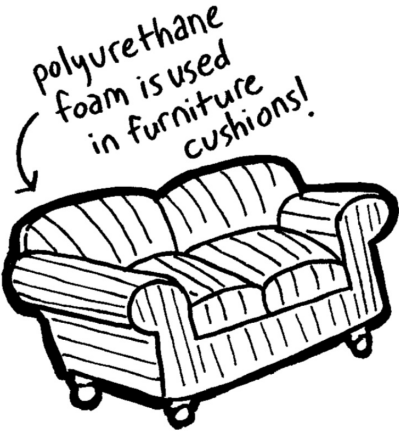


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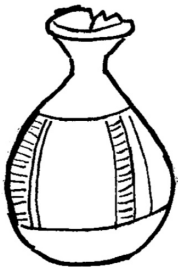
What are ARCHIVAL MATERIALS?



Archival materials ensure that the artifacts can be kept safe for a long time because they don't break down. Some materials do, like polyurethane foam and some woods and plastics. The breakdown of these materials can actually hurt artifacts due to acidity or off gassing, which can make papers fade, paint flake, or other objects become brittle and break.



Using the explanations on the next page, can you decide what would be the best archival material to use for storing these artifacts?



This pot is round on the bottom and needs to be supported so that it won't roll around. What should we use?



We need to be able to look at this map, but still keep it safe. What should we use?

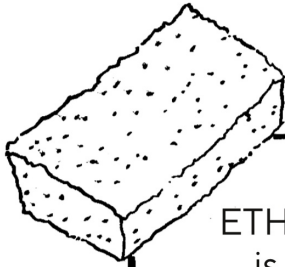
Unscramble to check your answer!

HELEPYLNOTYE
DSRO

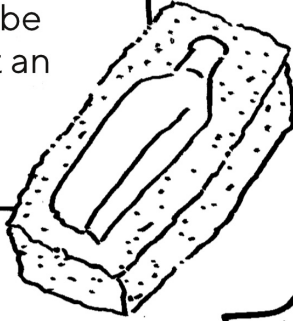
Unscramble to check your answer!

AYRML

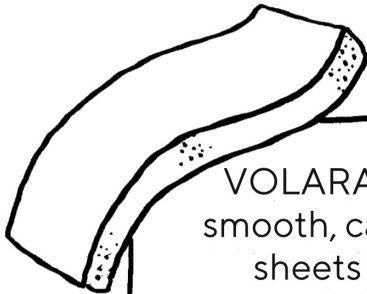
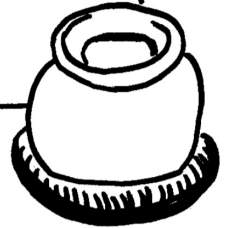
What archival materials do we use?



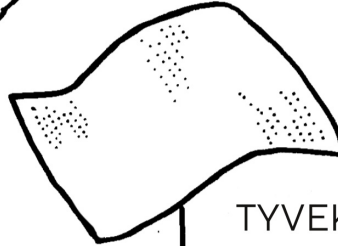
ETHAFOAM, which is rough, can be sculpted to fit an artifact.



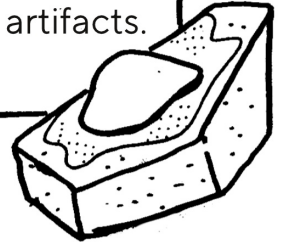
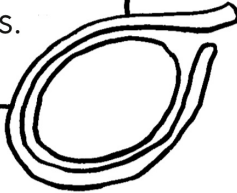
POLYETHYLENE RODS can be bent to make little round donut seats for round artifacts.



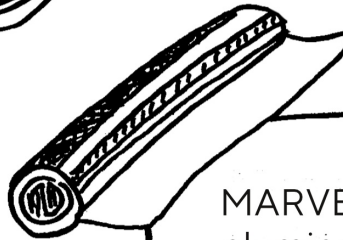
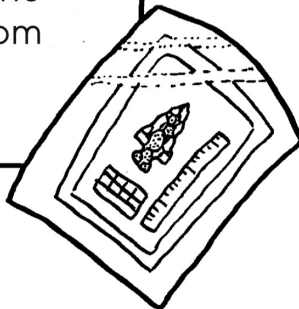
VOLARA, which is smooth, can come in sheets to wrap around artifacts.



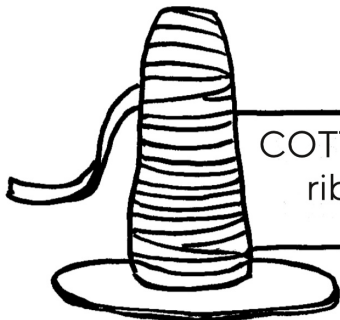
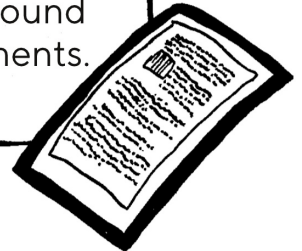
TYVEK, which is very smooth, prevents water in the air from reaching the artifacts.



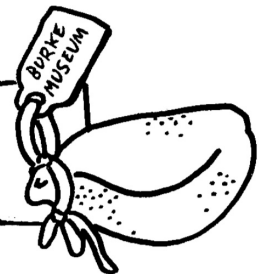
MYLAR is clear and lets researchers see artifacts while keeping the artifacts safe from handling.



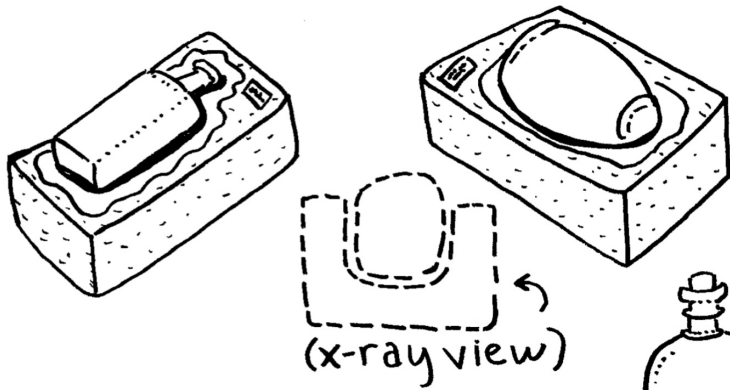
MARVELSEAL has aluminum in it and helps make air-tight seals around paper documents.



COTTON TWILL TAPE is unbleached cotton ribbon. We use it to tie things together.

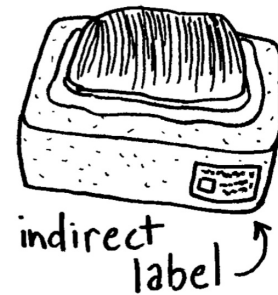


Rehousing means moving artifacts from old storage containers to new storage containers, like replacing an old bag when it wears out. We rehouse artifacts to keep them safe, but there are also lots of other ways of taking care of objects.



Mounts are built like cradles so that fragile items can be handled as little as possible.

Some artifacts are directly labeled (the label is stuck to the artifact) while others are indirectly labeled (the label is on the mount).



Museums have a history of not listening to Indigenous people who have personal connections to collections. Fortunately, this is changing. Indigenous communities are an important part of caring for these belongings. People with deep connections to their heritage can make sure that collections are being cared for appropriately.

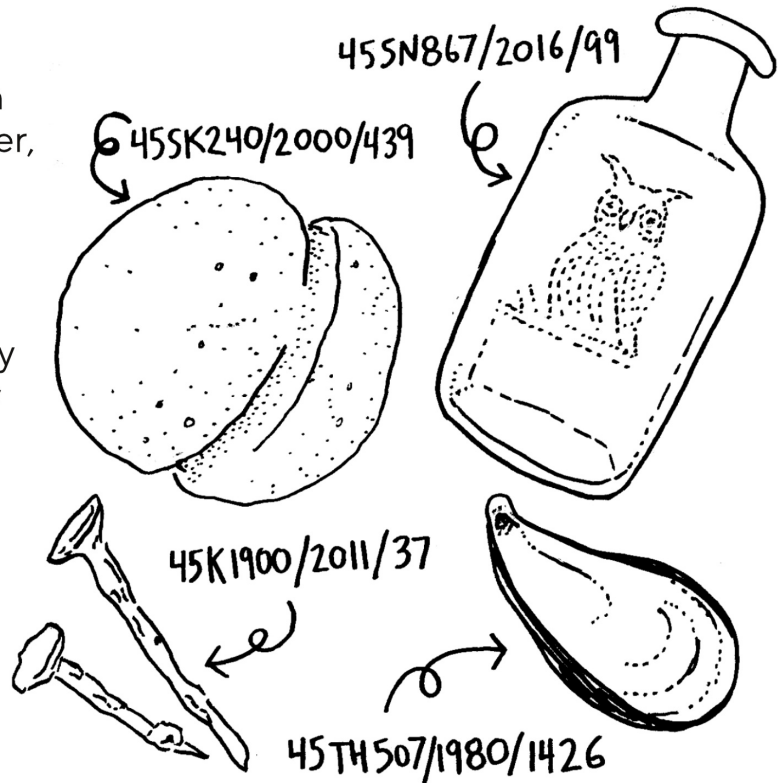


Help take care of the collection by creating a mount for this ceramic pot: draw a mount that will perfectly fit the artifact.

Every artifact in the collection has to be given a catalog number, so that we can keep track of where it is in the museum.

These catalog numbers are based on when and where they were collected and what they are.

Archaeological sites are also numbered using a system called the Smithsonian Trinomial System.



It lists:

45-KI-1300

the state,

the county,

and the sequential number of the site.

WA is the 45th state alphabetically

KI is the abbreviation for King County

This is the 1300th site in King County

Can you help researchers by assigning Smithsonian Trinomial numbers to these sites?

This is from the 503rd site in Mason County (MS), in Washington State.

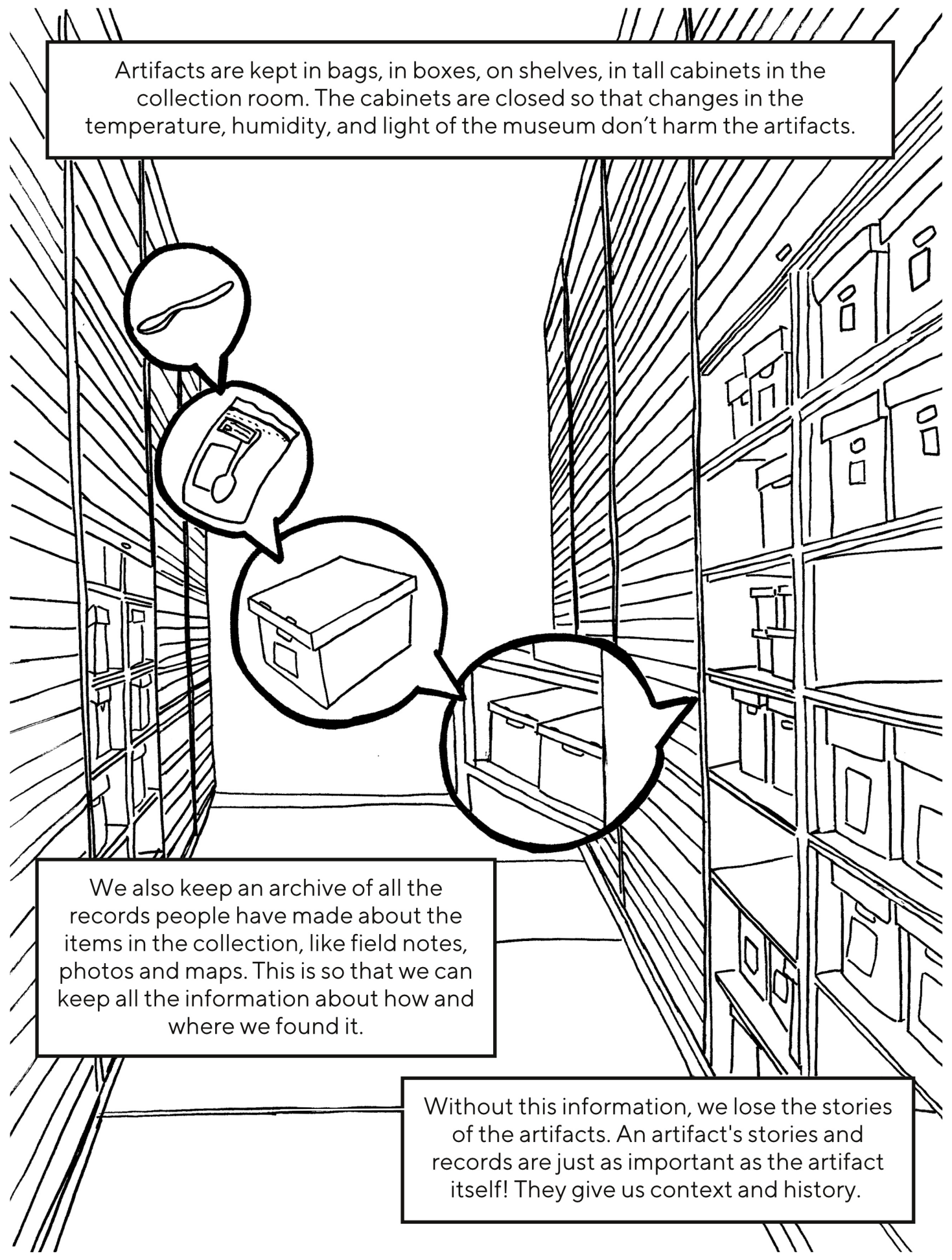


This is from the 76th site in Chelan County (CH), in Washington State.



site number

site number



Artifacts are kept in bags, in boxes, on shelves, in tall cabinets in the collection room. The cabinets are closed so that changes in the temperature, humidity, and light of the museum don't harm the artifacts.

We also keep an archive of all the records people have made about the items in the collection, like field notes, photos and maps. This is so that we can keep all the information about how and where we found it.

Without this information, we lose the stories of the artifacts. An artifact's stories and records are just as important as the artifact itself! They give us context and history.

Archaeologists often use the artifacts in the collection for research.

One researcher is studying the artifacts preserved in a privy in Arlington, WA, from a house built in the 1890s where many different people lived over the years.

A privy is what we now call an outhouse. When the privy was built, there were no garbage dumps, so people would also throw their garbage into the privy's pit.

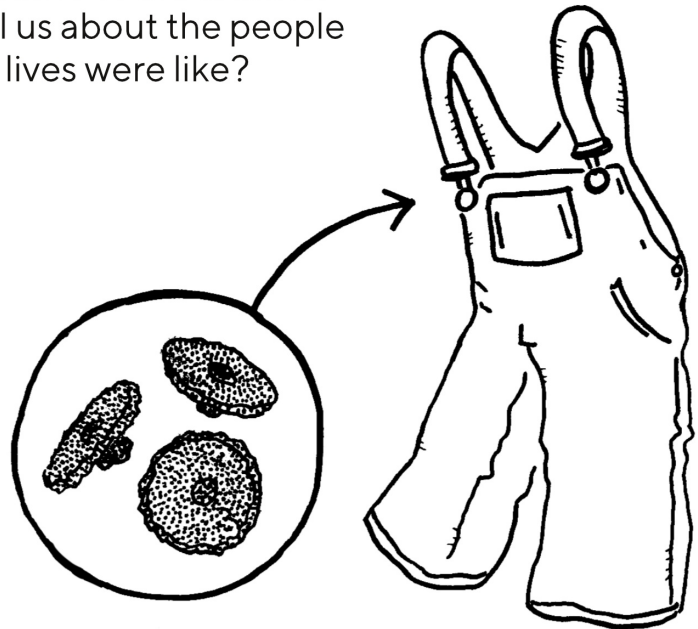
Because the newer trash piled up on top of older trash, we can see how the things thrown away change over time.



What things do you throw away? Draw some of them.
What might people learn about you from these things?

This is the trash left behind by people, so we get to see little pieces of their lives. These are some of the artifacts found in the privy. What can they tell us about the people who lived there and what their lives were like?

Overall buttons that were made in Tacoma and advertised as being tougher than the overalls made on the East coast. How did settlers on the West coast view themselves?



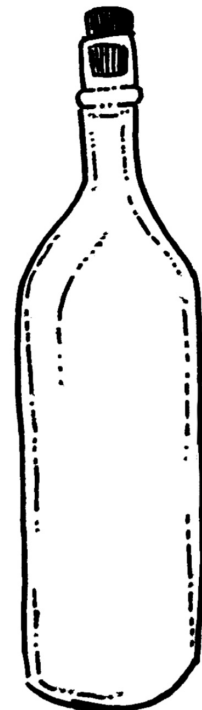
Bottles for patent medicines. What diseases and issues did these people have, and how were they trying to take care of themselves?

Chemical analysis of the insides of the bottles from the privy can tell us what was inside the bottles.

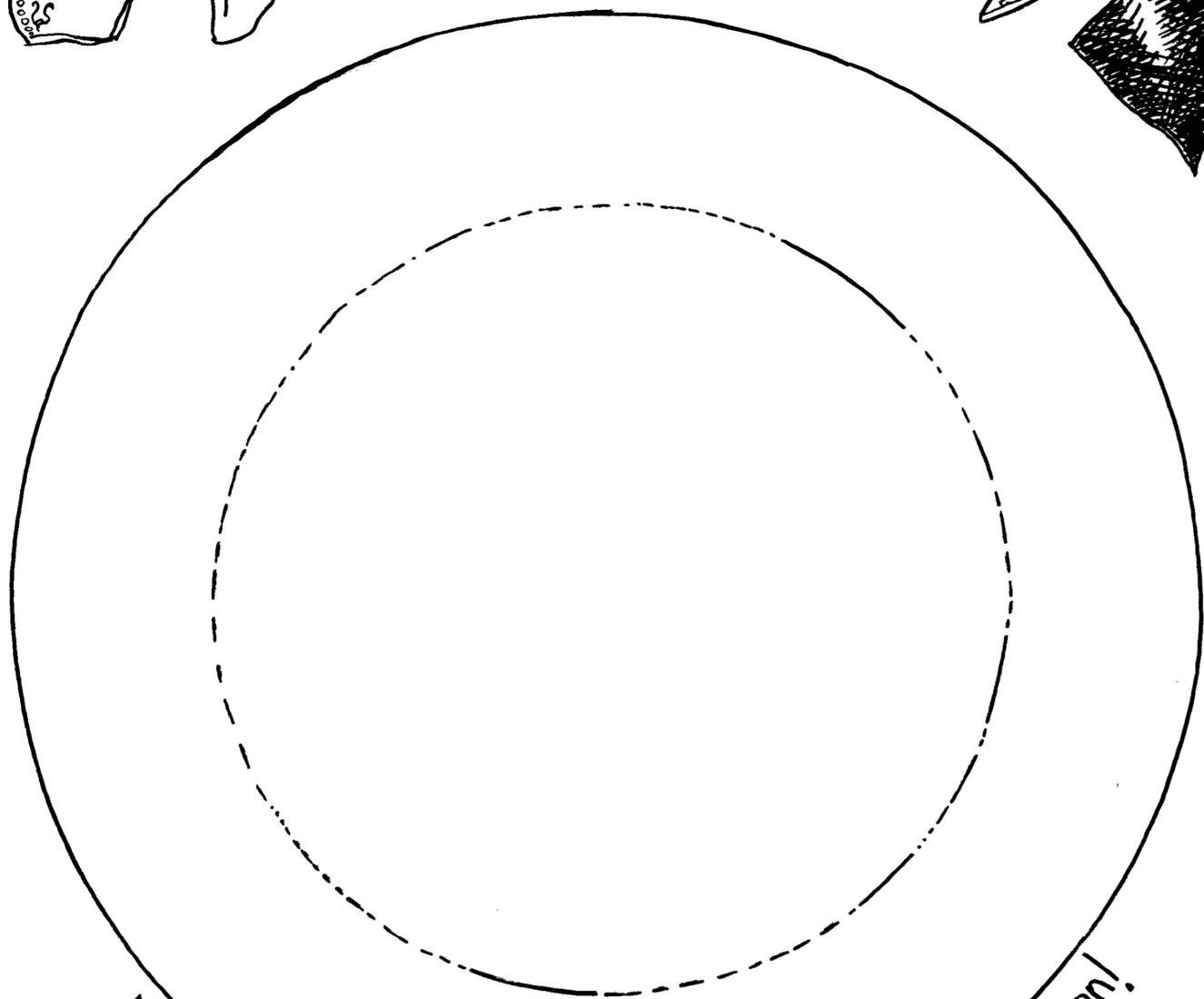
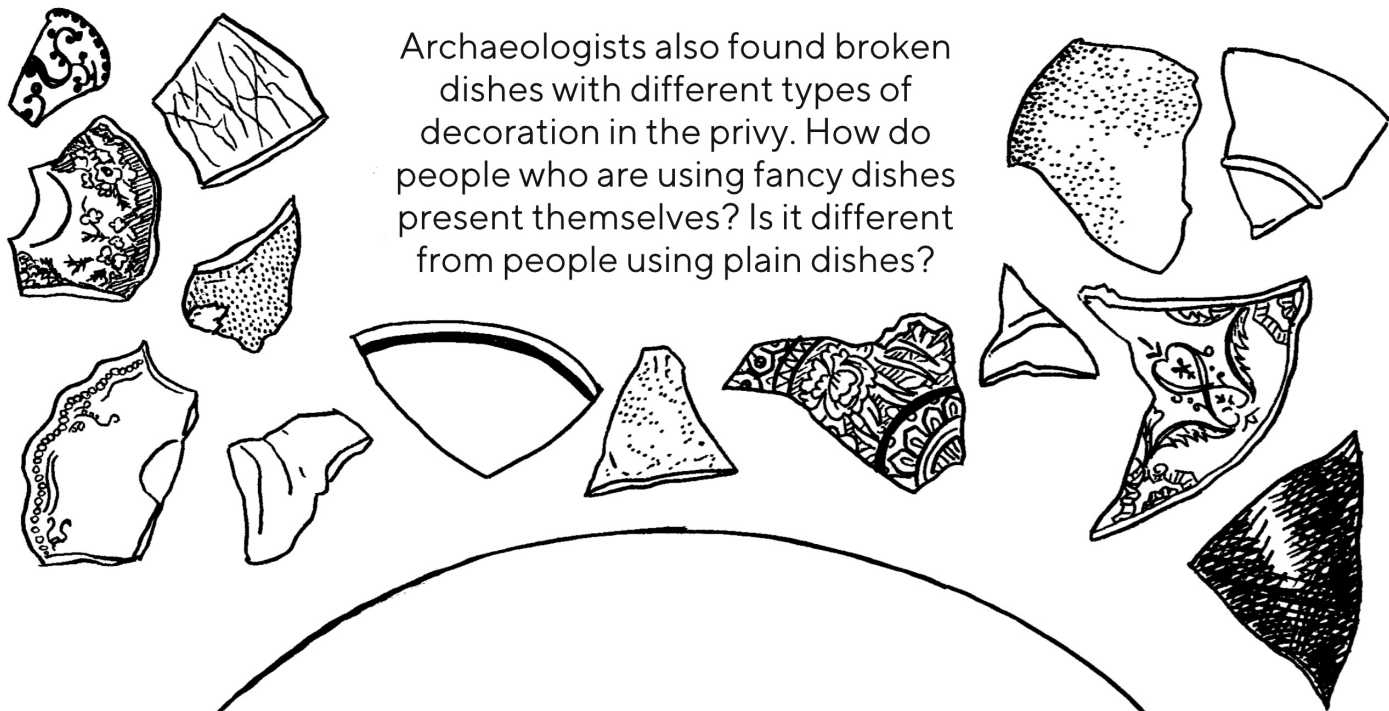
If the bottles are labeled, we can see what the bottle was sold as and if the ingredients listed on the label were the same as those inside the bottle.

Sometimes, though, bottles were reused.

This whiskey bottle was found to have been full of pee when it was thrown away!



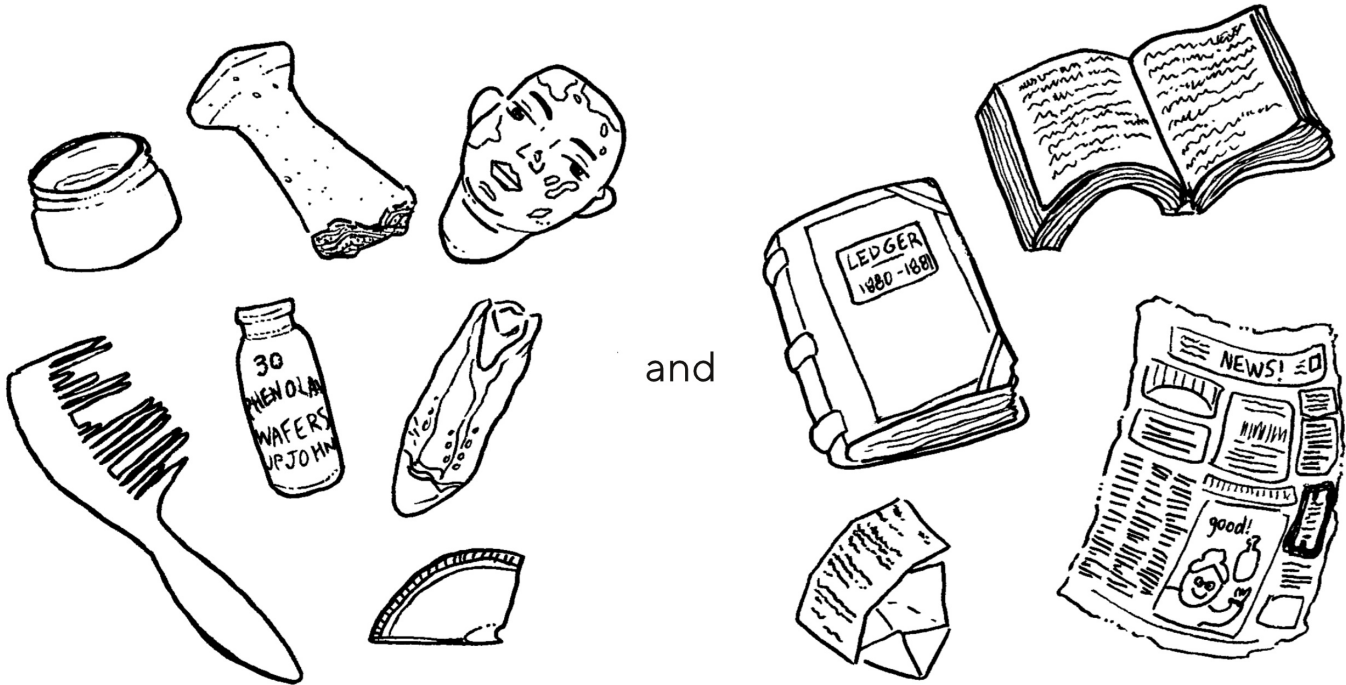
Archaeologists also found broken dishes with different types of decoration in the privy. How do people who are using fancy dishes present themselves? Is it different from people using plain dishes?



Decorate a plate you would like to serve food on!

Researchers using the artifacts that were found in the privy are working on a type of archaeology called

HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



Historical archaeology is the study of people, places, and times when written records are available to describe the lives of people. These records can agree or disagree with the archaeological evidence found at a site. In North America, historical archaeologists study sites from after the arrival of Europeans.

Can you think of some examples of why the written record and the artifacts might not tell the same story?

Think about:

Who is writing the records?

Who is leaving behind archaeological evidence?

Are they the same people?

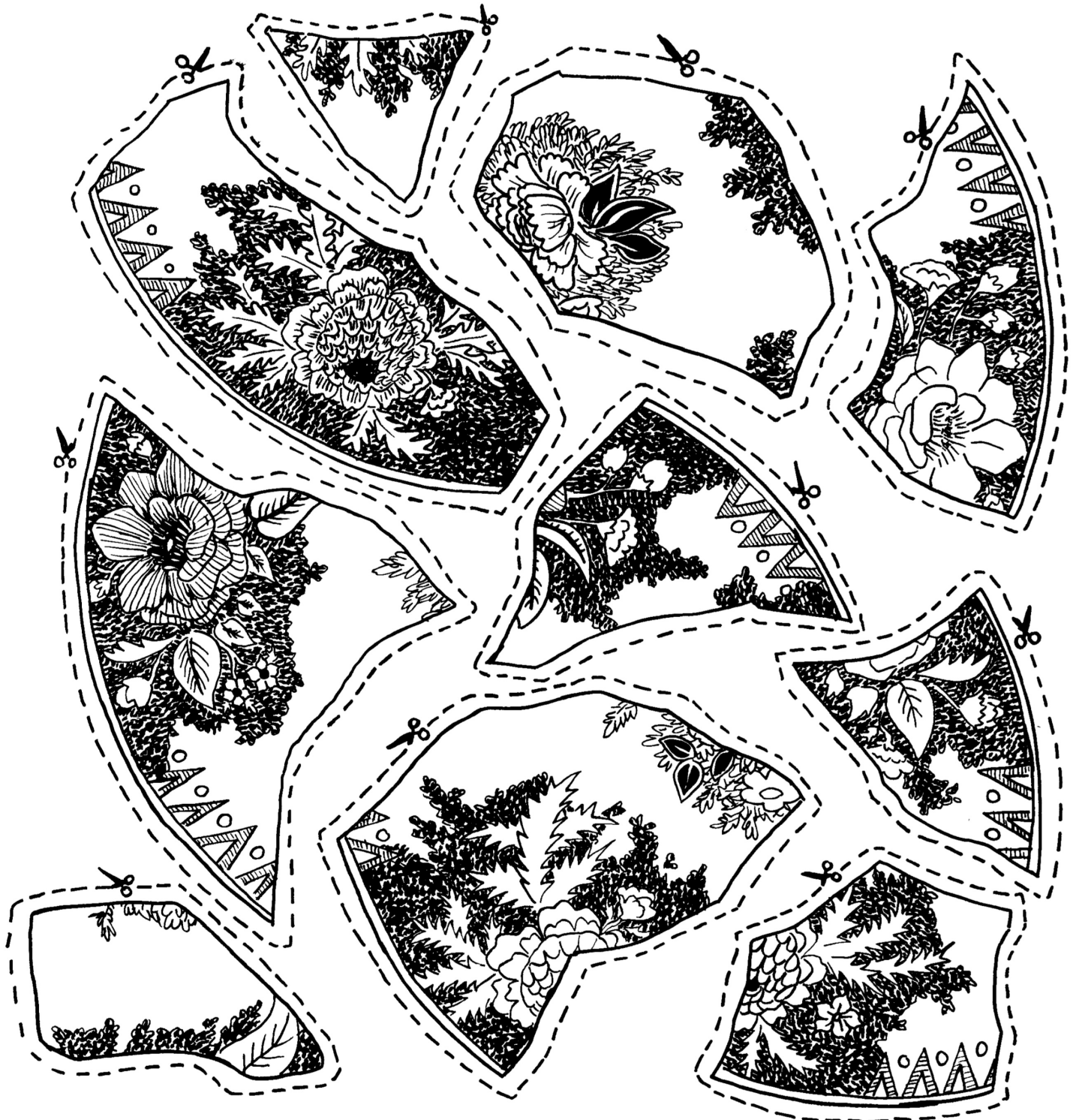
Would anyone want to misrepresent their lives in written records?



Archaeology is a puzzle!

Often, there are only fragments of artifacts left, or artifacts are damaged. Researchers will have to reassemble the items or put together the clues remaining to identify the artifacts.

Not only do archaeologists need to piece together broken artifacts, but they must use tiny bits of evidence to build theories of how people lived and who they were.



**Cut out these pieces and reassemble the broken plate!
You can use the pattern on the plate to guide you.**