



# Oneota Pre-visit

## Classroom Activity

### Brief Synopsis:

The Oneota are a pre-historic Native American culture unique to the Upper Midwest. Oneota pre-activities are designed to familiarize students with the characteristics of the Oneota and the challenges of uncovering information about them and other cultures without a written history.

### Background:

The Oneota were people that lived in the Upper Midwest of the United States from about 1000 AD to 1650 AD. The Oneota were not just one group of people, but rather many separate groups of people that shared common traits. The Oneota were a pre-historic culture, therefore there is no written record of them. Archeologists have had to reconstruct the details of the Oneota life by examining the artifacts the Oneota left behind. In these activities, students will examine “artifacts” left by their classmates in order to piece together details about their own culture and explore some common misconceptions about pre-historic Native Americans.

### Activity 1: *Pre-historic Puzzle*

#### Procedures:

- On a piece of tag board, have students draw any object that they use in daily life (i.e. car, pencil, cell phone.) Students should draw the object as large as possible then cut around it to remove areas not drawn in. They should not share with anyone what they are drawing.
  - ⇒ **Alternate Option:** Students can take their tag board home to cut out and paste objects from magazines they feel represent their daily life.
- Have students write a paragraph describing the object and why it is important in their daily life. They should not share their paragraphs with other students.
- Students should cut their picture into 15-20 pieces then place 10-15 of them in a small plastic bag.
- Collect the bags and distribute them to the class so that two students are paired up with each other without knowing it. (i.e. Jimmy has Susie’s puzzle and Susie has Jimmy’s puzzle but they don’t know they have each other’s.)
- Each student must try to reconstruct their new puzzle. Have students try to identify the object and write their own paragraph about what significance it may have to the person who drew it.
- Have students find the person who received their puzzle and share what they identified the object as and the paragraph they wrote about its significance. Compare that to what the student who chose that object wrote.

Continued....

**Ages:** Designed for 5th–8th grade

**Time Considerations:** Variable

**Materials:** Activity #1: *Prehistoric Puzzle*

- Tag board
- Small plastic bags
- Crayons/Markers
- Scissor

Activity #2: *Myth or Reality*

- Worksheet
- Transparency of Worksheet

Extension Activity:

- Oneota Life Picture

**Vocabulary:** archaeology, artifacts, culture, myth, pre-historic

#### Outcomes:

1. Students will observe, reconstruct, and identify artifacts and their cultural significance.
2. Students will experience the difficulties of determining cultural details without written records.

#### Minnesota Academic Standards:

History: 4-8. I.B.2, 4-8.II.A.1, 4-8.IV.B.3, 4-8.V.D.2

Language Arts: 4.III.A.2, 5.III.A.2, 6.III.A.3



- As a class, list the puzzle “artifacts” that were identified on the board or large piece of paper.

#### Discussion:

- What do the puzzle “artifacts” tell us about the classes’ culture?
- What was challenging about this activity? Were students able to identify the puzzle objects? Were they able to identify their significance to the students who drew them?
- What are some challenges archeologists face when determining an Oneotan object’s significance? i.e. No written records of the Oneota, unlike the students paragraphs.
- How do students think actual Oneota artifacts will differ from the objects they chose?

#### Activity 2: *Myth or Reality.*

#### Procedures:

- Lead students in a discussion on the definitions of “myth” and “reality”. Explain that today the class will examine some Native American and specifically Oneota myths and realities.
- Hand out a *Myth or Reality?* worksheet to each student.
- Explain to the students that you will be reading off some statements about Native American culture. They must decide if each statements is a Myth or Reality and check the appropriate box.
- Once the students have completed the worksheet, record their answers on the board.

#### Discussion:

- Where do we get most of our information on Native Americans?
- Why do some myths continue to be viewed as reality by most Americans?
- Is there harm in believing the myths? Why or why not?
- What resources would you use to determine the realities of Native American life and culture?
- What are some thoughts about what the Oneota class at Eagle Bluff will be like?

#### Extension Activity:

Make copies of the “Oneota Life” picture and distribute to the class. Have them look at the scene and write down their observations about Oneota life and culture based on what they see. The students will have a chance to experience some of these activities in Eagle Bluff’s Oneota class.

#### Teacher Tips

- The Oneota class outline is available online at [www.eagle-bluff.org](http://www.eagle-bluff.org) for additional information.
- Before Activity #2: Myth Versus Reality, read over the supplementary Oneota Information packet and online resources to familiarize yourself with Oneota life and culture.

#### Resources:

[http://www.uwlax.edu/MVAC/PreEuropeanPeople/EarlyCultures/mississippi\\_tradition.html](http://www.uwlax.edu/MVAC/PreEuropeanPeople/EarlyCultures/mississippi_tradition.html)

Mississippi Valley Archaeological Center website through the University of Wisconsin– La Crosse. A primary resource for Oneota information and research. Includes teaching trunk rentals and presentation opportunities.

[www.uiowa.edu/~osa/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~osa/)

Website for the Office of the State Archaeologist of Iowa. Another great resource for Oneota information and primary research.

[www.eagle-bluff.org/in-the-classroom.html](http://www.eagle-bluff.org/in-the-classroom.html)  
Supplementary Oneota Information Sheets, by state.

#### Recommended Fiction:

- *Children of the Longhouse*—Upper Elementary
- *The People Shall Continue*—Upper Elementary
- *The Sign of the Beaver*—Middle School
- *Bead on an Ant Hill*—Middle School



## Native American Myth or Reality?

*Fill in the blanks with the letter you feel best completes the statement.*

*“M” if you think the statement is a Myth” or “R” if you think it is a Reality.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Oneotans lived in teepees.

\_\_\_\_\_ Oneotans wore feathered headdresses.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Oneota made clay pots.

\_\_\_\_\_ Oneota hunted and ate bison.

\_\_\_\_\_ Oneota were farmers.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Oneota used a war-whoop when on the war-path.

\_\_\_\_\_ Oneotans wore war paint.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Oneota had respect for their elders.

\_\_\_\_\_ Oneotans wore their hair in braids.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Oneota lived on the prairie.

\_\_\_\_\_ Oneotans passed along stories.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Oneota used smoke signals to communicate.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Oneotans used “landfills”.



## Native American Myth Versus Reality

Fill in the blanks with the letter you feel best completes the statement.

"M" if you think the statements is a Myth" or "R" if you think it is a Reality.

  M   Oneotans lived in teepees. *They lived in wood, bark and animal skin dwellings called "longhouses."*

  M   Oneotans wore feathered headdresses. *The Oneota were thought to use beads, shells, and feathers to decorate hair rather than in headdresses.*

  R   The Oneota used clay pots.

  R   Oneota hunted and ate bison. *Some of the other animals they hunted for food included deer, elk, black bear, turkey, raccoon, and turtle.*

  R   Oneota were farmers. *They raised different varieties of corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, and sunflowers.*

  M   The Oneota used a war-"whoop" when on the "war-path."  
*The Oneota were not thought to war with other groups.*

  M   Oneotans wore war paint. *Some wore face paint but not for warring purposes.*

  R   The Oneota had much respect for their elders.

  R   Oneotans wore their hair in braids. *Women were thought to wear their hair in braids, two for single women, one for married. Men often shaved most of their hair but left a single braid down the middle called "scalplock"*

  M   The Oneota lived on the prairie. *The Oneota lived in areas near rivers which included some open flood plains and woodlands, not prairies.*

  R   Oneotans passed along stories. *The Oneota did not have a written language therefore shared information orally through stories and songs.*

  M   The Oneota used smoke signals to communicate.

  R   The Oneotans used "landfills". *Pits were used to collect used hides, food remains, broken pottery etc. These are called "middens."*

*This information is based on research from the Iowa State Archeologist and traditions within the modern Ioway tribe, who are thought to be descendants of the pre-historic Oneota.*