



Activity overview

Through archaeology and DNA analysis we can learn lots about people that lived a long time ago. We can find out how people lived, what they ate and even what they looked like. But why are we interested in our past? What does it tell us about ourselves? What can we learn that may help us in the future?

Today we can find out more about people and animals from the past by looking at their DNA. For example, it can give us clues about what they might have looked like. We can also find traces of DNA from their teeth that can suggest what they ate, and even bits of DNA from bacteria, like the plague. Ancient pollen found on buried items can even help us to find out what plants were alive during that time.

This activity is designed to encourage pupils to think about and discuss their ideas about what we can learn from the past through archaeology and DNA. What can we learn about our ancestors and ourselves? Does finding ancient DNA enable us to bring animals back from the past? The activity includes some structured questions for you to use to start some conversations, and includes “thought bubble” activity sheets for pupils to share their thoughts, which could be collected in a display. We encourage you to be creative with this activity. The conversation starters can be used as the basis of other activities, for example staging an interview with someone from the past, writing a story about what you could find out, or creating a newspaper front page about bringing something extinct back to life.

Supporting resources

There are some online resources that you may wish to use to support this activity.

Bringing back the woolly mammoth

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/33099026>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/27/woolly-mammoth-genome-video_n_7137764.html

<http://www.voanews.com/a/how-to-clone-a-mammoth-science-of-de-extinction/2780036.html>



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