

REMIXING ÇATALHÖYÜK

Teacher's Guide

Activity: Imagining the Life Histories of Çatalhöyük

How do clues left behind give us insight on the peoples, places, and cultures of the past?

How do we make sense of these remains and the stories, or "life histories," they represent?

How can we help students create their own interpretations of the past?

Goals of the Activity

Archaeologists know that there is no one absolute "truth" or "correct" version of the past. This activity asks students to consider what archaeologists have found out about Çatalhöyük—a farming settlement where thousands of people lived more than 9,000 years ago—and imagine what life might have been like then.

In this activity, students think about the "life histories" of the people, places, and things of Çatalhöyük and compare them to their own life histories. Students might consider, for example, the cycles of an object's use and discard (How long do you use a knife before you throw it away? Did the same thing happen at Çatalhöyük?), or the processes of building construction and renewal (What's under the floor of the house where you live? Is it the same at Çatalhöyük?).

Understandings of the life histories of people, places, and things at Çatalhöyük are constantly evolving and changing, providing multiple threads of interpretation about the past. That's what makes archaeology a dynamic process. In this activity, students will participate in interpreting the clues left behind at Çatalhöyük, and in the process, they will begin to understand that archaeologists also bring their own individual knowledge and experience to bear on what they find.

This activity is designed for middle school students, though it can easily be adapted for other age ranges. It will help students add their own interpretations and life stories to the rich history and narratives of Çatalhöyük.

Time Needed

Depending upon student expectations, this activity can be done in one afternoon or in concurrent sessions, and portions may be assigned as homework or as outside projects. Projects can be as simple as essays and illustrations posted in the classroom, or as complex as individual or group multimedia presentations.

If done in class, introduction, discussions, and basic project work will take approximately four to five hours: one hour to introduce the activity, read the introductory information, and see the introductory video; one hour of discussion time as guided by the Discussion Sheets; one to two hours to create projects; and one hour for presentations.

Equipment and Materials Needed

Teachers will need to have a demonstration computer available during class time. The computer will need Internet access in order to show a short online video to students. (Note that additional resources and information are also available online for students, if resources allow.)

Teachers will need to be able to print out five PDFs, and copy and distribute them to students. The first, "Welcome to the Çatalhöyük Project," contains introduction and background information. The remaining four are "Discussion Sheets" that focus on specific topics for class discussions, offering images and information to help guide students as they think about life in the past.

Depending upon time and resources available, you may choose to have children work individually or in small groups.

Classrooms will need basic writing and art supplies (paper, colored pens/pencils, poster boards or butcher paper, glue, markers, and so on) for in-class art/essay projects. Additional resources may be needed for more complex assignments. Classrooms with access to computers can create digital multimedia projects.

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Compliance with California State Content Standards

This activity draws on the California State Content Standards to help demonstrate higher levels of “critical thinking” by linking the past to the present. Photographs, multimedia presentations, and scholarly articles are meant to provide evidence to guide students with these interpretations and narratives. Included in this activity are links to assist with the implementation of the project and for further reference.

Compliance with California History–Social Science Content Standards for Grade Six

This activity complies with Section 6.1 of the California History–Social Science Content Standards for sixth grade students (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/hstgrade6.asp>), which requires that “Students describe what is known through archaeological studies of the early physical and cultural development of humankind from the Paleolithic era to the agricultural revolution.”

Additional Information and Resources

Museum Video

http://okapi.berkeley.edu/catal_museum.mov

A great online video introduction to the archaeological site of Çatalhöyük.

Introductory Video: Life Histories of People, Places, and Things

http://okapi.dreamhosters.com/video/catal/catal_museum.mov

Learn about how archaeologists are interpreting the life histories of people, places, and things at Çatalhöyük.

Collection: Life Histories of People, Places and Things

<http://okapi.berkeley.edu/res/sites/life>

See what archaeologists found during their excavations of Building 3 at Çatalhöyük, and read about why it is important to understanding life in the past. Original photos, videos, and articles from the archaeologists.

Remixing Çatalhöyük Website

<http://okapi.berkeley.edu/remixing>

Open collections of articles, multimedia presentations, captioned photos, videos, and more from the BACH team’s work at Building 3 at Çatalhöyük. The home site for this student activity.

“This Old House”

http://www.naturalhistorymag.com/0606/0606_feature.html

A fascinating illustrated article about Çatalhöyük by archaeologist Ian Hodder, Dunlevie Family Professor in the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology at Stanford University and Çatalhöyük Project leader. Adapted from Hodder’s book, *The Leopard’s Tale* (Thames and Hudson, 2006) for *Natural History Magazine* (June 2006).

Mysteries of Çatalhöyük

<http://www.smm.org/catal/>

This website from the Science Museum of Minnesota contains student–friendly information and activities about understandings and discoveries at Çatalhöyük.

Çatalhöyük: Excavations of a Neolithic Anatolian Höyük

<http://www.catalhoyuk.com/>

The official website for the Çatalhöyük Research Project.

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Instructions

Preparation

1. Download the five PDFs below. Print enough copies so that each student has one copy of “Welcome to the Çatalhöyük Project” (introductory and background material), and one of the four “Discussion Sheet” topics (to help guide classroom discussions).

Introduction/Background Information: [Welcome to the Çatalhöyük Project \(PDF\)](#)

Discussion Sheet 1: [Everyday Life at Çatalhöyük \(PDF\)](#)

Discussion Sheet 2: [Life and Death at Çatalhöyük \(PDF\)](#)

Discussion Sheet 3: [Agriculture and Domestication: Plants and Animals at Çatalhöyük \(PDF\)](#)

Discussion Sheet 4: [The Houses of Çatalhöyük \(PDF\)](#)

Introduction

2. Introduce the project by telling students they’re going to “take a trip back in time” to a real place in Turkey as it was in the Neolithic or “New Stone Age,” more than 9,000 years ago. Begin by locating Turkey on a world map, and then locate the archaeological site of Çatalhöyük on a more detailed map of the country. (See Map in Excavate the Site of [Remixing Çatalhöyük](#).)
3. Distribute “Welcome to the Çatalhöyük Project” and ask students to read the handout. (This handout offers basic information for teachers; for more, see further resources in this website, as well as the “Additional Information and Resources” listed above.)

Classroom Discussion

4. Set up a demonstration computer and have students watch the short film at http://okapi.dreamhosters.com/video/catal/catal_museum.mov. Then distribute discussion sheets as appropriate to the group work desired (for individual work, you might allow students to choose the topics they are most interested in; for small work groups, you might have different groups do different topics, and so on).
5. Gather students into work groups to brainstorm thoughts and ideas about the photos and questions presented on the discussion sheets. As they think about the questions posed on the discussion sheets, students should compare and contrast their own life experiences with those of the people of Çatalhöyük.

Project Assignment and Presentation

6. Assign individual or group projects based on the discussions students have had. Ask them to create a “diary entry” on poster board, or digital multimedia project describing a day in the life of a person, place, or thing at Çatalhöyük 9,000 years ago. Students might imagine themselves as people of any age—children, teenagers, adults, grandparents, and so on—and must use evidence to support their explanations and projects. Students may also imagine themselves to be an object or artifact from the site, and describe their “experience” of being created, used, and discarded, or they might choose to be a house in Çatalhöyük, and describe a typical day of being lived in by a Neolithic family. This project should allow for a wide range of interpretations.
7. Have students present their findings to the class and/or display poster boards and collages in the classroom.

Extensions

8. Students interested in exploring further can learn more about both life at Çatalhöyük and the processes of archaeology by reading the four articles that introduce the collected resources in this website:

Life Histories of People, Places, and Things <http://okapi.berkeley.edu/res/sites/life>

Senses of Place <http://okapi.berkeley.edu/res/sites/senses>

Archaeology at Different Scales <http://okapi.berkeley.edu/res/sites/scales>

The Public Face of Archaeology <http://okapi.berkeley.edu/res/sites/public>

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Imagining Life in the Neolithic Farming Settlement of Çatalhöyük

Discussion Sheet 1: Everyday Life at Çatalhöyük

Explore the photos and information on this sheet and use your imagination to create your own story of life in a Neolithic household, more than 9,000 years ago.

Think About This...

Think about the things you do on a typical school day. For instance, you might make your bed, brush your teeth, eat breakfast, drive in a car, write a story in class, listen to music, play a sport, and so on.

This list is one way to describe part of your “life history.” Every person, place, and thing has a story that describes where it came from and what happened to it during its lifetime. Keep your list in mind as you think about these questions:

1. If you lived 9,000 years ago, how different would your life history be? Would you do the same things? Use the same tools? Get from place to place the same way? Learn the same information? Would you do these activities alone or with other people? Who might these other people be?

2. When archaeologists dig into the past, they find the things that have lasted over the years, but not the parts that have disappeared over time. At Çatalhöyük, for example, archaeologists found a buckle made of bone, but not what it was attached to. What happened to the rest of it? They also found a sharp stone “point” that looks like an arrowhead or spear tip, but they can’t really be sure what it was attached to. Where did the rest of it go?

A thousand years from now, what will remain from your life story? What will be missing? Just like archaeologists of today, archaeologists of the future will have to interpret the clues that are left behind and make educated guesses, or hypotheses, based on their research.

What are your ideas about the “life histories,” or stories of these objects?



OVEN CROSS-SECTION PHOTO

The layers of dark stripes at the bottom of the picture show burnt surfaces. The structure above is the “cross-section” of an oven—a look in through a broken-off side. The oven had thick clay walls and a sort of dome at the top. What do you think people used ovens for? Did they use ovens the same way we do today?



MINI CLAY BALLS PHOTO

This close-up picture shows a basin filled with tiny clay balls found in a storage bin in Building 3. At Çatalhöyük, archaeologists found lots of little balls made of clay—some the size of peas, and some the size of baseballs—but they aren’t sure what the little clay balls were for. What do you think they were for?



OBSIDIAN & FLINT POINT PHOTOS

Two stone points found in Building 3. One is made of a shiny black stone called obsidian; the other is made of flint and has a decorative bone handle. How would these sharp objects have been used? Would they have been used for the same kinds of things? Why would one be plain, and the other decorated? What pieces are missing that might tell us more about them?



BONE BUCKLE PHOTO

A two-piece bone buckle. What do you think it was for? Who do you think might have owned it?

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Imagining Life in the Neolithic Farming Settlement of Çatalhöyük

Discussion Sheet 2: Life and Death at Çatalhöyük

Explore the photos and information on this sheet and use your imagination to create your own story of life in a Neolithic household, more than 9,000 years ago.

Think About This:

Think about the things you do as you grow up. For instance, you make new friends, lose your baby teeth, learn to walk, start school, learn to read and write, take trips away from home, and so on.

Think about each activity as a piece of the story of your life, or your “life history.” Every person, place, and thing has a story that describes where it came from and what happened to it during its lifetime. Keep your list in mind as you think about these questions:

1. How has your life changed over the years? Do you do more chores at home? Play games you couldn't play when you were younger? Have you learned to play a musical instrument? Broken any teeth or bones? What do you see yourself doing as an adult or grandparent? Have your activities affected your body? Would similar things have happened 9,000 years ago to young people? Old people?
2. The pictures here show burials found under the floor of a home in Çatalhöyük. Why do you think people were buried under the floors of homes? Who do you think these people were? How would you feel about having a burial under the floor of your house? Did the people of Çatalhöyük feel the same way? What might this suggest about how people in this society viewed death?



SINGLE ADULT MALE BURIAL PHOTO

This person, probably an adult male, was buried under the floor of a house all by himself. What do you think that could mean?



BABY'S BONES & BEADS PHOTO

These are the bones from a baby's burial. Tiny, different-colored clay beads were also found with the burial. What do you think the beads were for? Who made them? Why?



BURIAL OF TWO CHILDREN PHOTO

These two young children were probably buried together. What might have happened to them? Could they have been related?



THREE PEOPLE BURIED UNDER THE FLOOR PHOTO

Three people were found buried in this pit, under the floor inside a house. Each burial happened at a different time. What do you think happened here? Why would they be buried in the same location if they died and were buried at different times?

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Imagining Life in the Neolithic Farming Settlement of Çatalhöyük

Discussion Sheet 3: Agriculture and Domestication: Plants and Animals at Çatalhöyük

Explore the photos and information on this sheet and use your imagination to create your own story of life in a Neolithic household, more than 9,000 years ago.

Think About This:

Imagine that you're living at Çatalhöyük 9,000 years ago. There are no other towns around. In the winter, it's cold and snowy. In the summer, it's hot. There's a river nearby, but there's no running water inside the house. There's no electricity. No heating or air conditioning. There are no matches to make fires. No computers or televisions. Nobody takes the trash away each week, or delivers newspapers, so you can't really tell what's going on anywhere else.

How would the story of your life be different from what it is today?

1. If you lived in Çatalhöyük 9,000 years ago, what would you eat? Drink? What would your job be? Could it have something to do with plant or animal life?
2. Why would it be helpful to settle down and create permanent settlements, as people did in Çatalhöyük, rather than moving from place to place? What could you do to make sure you always had food?



CARBONIZED SEEDS PHOTO

These carbonized (burnt) seeds came from wheat and barley grown by the farmers of Çatalhöyük. The farmers could not have gone to the store to buy the seed. Where do you think it came from?



MIDDEN PHOTO

This is a picture of a burial pit from Building 3. The dark soil inside the pit is from a midden, which is an area where people threw away their refuse and the leftovers from what they ate. The midden material was dug up from below the house foundation when the burial pit was dug. What do you think might have originally been in this midden? Would people in the Neolithic throw away the same kinds of things we do today? What do you think might be left for us to find? What can midden materials tell us about life in Çatalhöyük? Will your trash provide clues about life today for archaeologists of the future?



AUROCHS HORN CORE PHOTO

This photo shows a partial skull and the rounded horns of what was probably an aurochs—wild cattle that are extinct today. What do you think happened to aurochs? How would the people of Çatalhöyük have used them? How do you think people hunted aurochs?



CLAY ANIMAL FIGURINE PHOTO

This clay figurine of an animal was found at Çatalhöyük. What do you think it is? Have you ever owned a figurine of an animal? What did you do with it? Do you think the people of Çatalhöyük wanted the figurine for the same reason? What are some other reasons the people of Çatalhöyük might have made figurines of animals?

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Imagining Life in the Neolithic Farming Settlement of Çatalhöyük

Discussion Sheet 4: The Houses at Çatalhöyük

Explore the photos and information on this sheet and use your imagination to create your own story of life in a Neolithic household, more than 9,000 years ago.

Think About This:

Just like human beings, houses also have life histories. Through generations of families who build, repair, and dismantle them, houses also tell stories of the past. Nine thousand years ago, the people of Çatalhöyük did not buy and sell their houses or move from place to place. Instead, they lived in the same house for their entire life.

Imagine that you live in a small house—maybe just the size of a living room and kitchen together today—along with your entire family, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives. Your neighbors live in similar houses next to yours. What would life there be like?

1. Think about how people lived at Çatalhöyük. The houses were packed close together. People lived with all their relatives, people of every age, from babies to grandparents. What sounds would you hear? What odors would you smell? Would it be smoky inside? Hot? Cold? Dark? Light?
2. Houses at Çatalhöyük didn't have regular doors—just holes in the roofs with ladders so you could climb in and out of the houses. Why do you think the houses were built this way? Can you think of a reason why it might be a better idea to have roof openings than door openings? How would you move in and out of your house? Are there places you might not be allowed to go? Where would your favorite place be?



MEN BUILDING REPLICA HOUSE PHOTO

The archaeologists designed a replica house and built it the same way the people of Çatalhöyük built their houses 9,000 years ago. What do you think they could learn from the replica house that they couldn't learn from their excavations?



INSIDE REPLICA HOUSE PHOTO

The replica house had an oven built like the real ones at Çatalhöyük. What would it have been like to cook here? Smoky? Hot? Dangerous? (The real buildings didn't have doorways; the one here was cut for tourists.)



WOMEN SITTING ON PLATFORM PHOTO

These Turkish visitors are sitting on the northwest platform of Building 3, a raised area of the floor built up against one wall of the house. What do you think these platforms were for? If you had one in your house, how would you use it?



10 PEOPLE IN BUILDING 3 PHOTO

There's plenty of room for ten archaeologists to work side-by-side in Building 3. But what do you think it might have been like if they all lived together here? How many people do you think might have lived in a typical house in Çatalhöyük? How would you feel about living in a small house with lots of other people? How would it affect your day-to-day life?

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