

Shellmounds.

Instructions for Teachers Before the Museum Visit

It is important that students know what shellmounds are, how they were built, and what they contained. Students will find out about all of these things in the exhibition, but there are some things you can do to prepare them for the visit.

- Shellmounds contain a mix of shells, bones, soil, ash, rocks, tools, regalia (ornamental clothing/items used in ceremonials), and human remains from burials.
- It is believed today that these shellmounds were sacred burial sites for important people within the group.
- The Emeryville Shellmound was built over thousands of years, it reached over 60 feet in height and was longer than three football fields.
- In the past some people thought the shellmounds were garbage dumps (middens) and today most of the mounds have been destroyed and/or covered over.

Provide an overview of what shellmounds are, what scientists have found there, what scientists thought of shellmounds in the past, and what we believe to be true today. Use discussions and leading questions to provide information. Explain that what we know about the past sometimes changes over time as we get more information and when we look at evidence in different ways.

The following activity might help students to understand what they will see at the museum:

This lesson is designed to help explain/show that the way we treat things often reflects the way we feel about them. **Read this to students**, and allow feedback/comments as appropriate:

Imagine that you are going through some things in your great-grandparent's home and you find a group of photographs in an envelope. Some of them are in good condition, there are no names to identify who's in the photos, and there are about ten to twelve photos in the envelope.

You need to decide what to do with this envelope. Your choices will probably reflect how important you feel these photos are (to you).

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- You throw them away in the trashcan (you probably don't find them important or interesting)
 - You put them back where you found them (maybe kind of interesting, but not important enough for you to deal with them)
 - You take them to share with your family and to find out who is in the photos (you are interested and they could be important)
 - You find out who the people are and take some of the photos to a studio to make prints to frame and hang in your living room (they are very important and special)

Ask students if they have other ideas about what they might do with the photos. Ask the students for other examples of ways we treat things. Some examples—saving/preserving old buildings; keeping items in museums; replacing older machines with newer more modern ones; balling up and throwing away a certificate or award from school; stuffing clothes under the bed instead of hanging them up or putting them into drawers; collecting shells from the beach, cleaning them up, then displaying them on a shelf in your room

Museum Visit

Have students go to the Shellmound section of the exhibition. In the exhibit, have students especially take note of what shellmounds are and how they have been treated over the years. They can write down four or five things they think are interesting/important, including what they think or feel about what they have seen and/or why they chose to include it.

Make sure students use only pencils for work done at the museum.

After the Visit

Allow time for students to share their notes (and any ideas/thoughts) they have after the museum visit. You can do this as a whole class or have students break into groups, then report back to the whole class.

Use the student worksheet, parts 1 and 2, to extend the museum experience. Go over the directions with students (along with the facts listed at the top of the worksheet. Make sure students understand what is being asked for. You might want to complete the activities on different days.

There may or may not be a consensus of students' choices on the worksheets [part 1: X, O, or blank; and also their answers for part 2]. This is not a multiple-choice activity where there is only one correct answer. Accept any answers students give. It is more important that students are allowed to form an opinion and to express it. For part 1, if there are blank spaces, students may benefit from hearing other students' ideas. Please do not "grade" responses as right or wrong—allow each student to have their opinions; the goal is to generate a discussion.

Student worksheet after visiting the Museum

- For years, many people believed that shellmounds were just piles of trash. Today, we know they were actually special burial places where native people put their dead to rest.
- At one time there were more than 400 shellmounds in the Bay Area. Today most of them have been destroyed or covered over.
- The Huchiun Ohlone built the Emeryville Shellmound over the course of 3,000 years. It was one of the largest shellmounds in the area, rising to a height of 60 feet (as tall as a six story building), with a length of three football fields (more than 300 yards). The shellmound was recorded on early Spanish maps in the 1770's as "Temescal Hill".

Part 1:

Look at this list of some things people have done to the Emeryville Shellmound.

Put X if it seems to show that some people thought the Shellmound was an *important* part of Bay Area history worth noting. Put O if it shows that some people did *not* seem to consider the Shellmound was an important part of Bay Area history. If you are not sure, leave the space blank.

 X In 1909, N. C. Nelson made a map of the shellmounds in the Bay Area.

 O Today most of the shellmounds have been destroyed.

 In the 1770's the Emeryville Shellmound was recorded on a Spanish map as "Temescal Hill"

 In the late 1800's citizens of Emeryville removed the top of the Shellmound and built a dance hall on top for fun-seekers.

 Archaeologists (people who study what remains of past civilizations) dug up the Shellmound and found out that there were the remains from hundreds of burials and other artifacts (items they used) buried in the mound.

 In 1924, the Shellmound was razed (destroyed) and covered over with soil

 In Emeryville today there is a street named "Shellmound Street"

Part 2:

A. Do you think shellmounds are an important part of the history of the Bay Area? Explain your answer.

B. Today, Native American descendants (relatives of earlier people) are trying to have the human remains, special objects, shells, and other items returned for proper burial and treatment. They feel that the Emeryville Shellmound and other shellmounds have been disrespected and poorly handled.

Many of the descendants want people to hear their concerns and to recognize the value of the Shellmounds. Some of these descendants come to Emeryville every year to peacefully protest* the way the Shellmound has been treated over the years (*show their unhappiness with the way things have been done).

Should their descendants continue to protest in this way or do something else? Explain.

C. What do you think we should do today with the places where shellmound are or once stood and their remains?

- Leave them as they are
- Return the remains from the shellmounds to their descendants
- Try to save the shellmounds that still stand
- Do something else (tell what this would be)

Choose one or more from above and *explain* why you think so.