



# WITNESS THE PAST

EDUCATION PROGRAM ON  
ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF ANTIQUITIES

**- Lesson Plan -**

## A Treasure of Gold

Film by Anemon Productions



Education and Culture DG



"JOHNAZ"

Culture Programme

### **General Outline & Objectives of Lesson Plan for Museums**

The general outline of the proposed lesson plan includes:

- A.** Background information for the science of archaeology and the civilization presented in the movie
- B.** A Movie with a story of illicit trafficking of a site (Greece, Egypt, Cyprus).
- C.** A question and answer session and/or a group discussion.
- D.** A practical didactic exercise based on the use of real artifacts, Legos and replicas and mock excavation.

### **The main objectives of the lesson plan are to:**

1. Give general background information, including basic information for the aim and the tools of archaeology science.
2. Give specialized background information related to the theme of the three movies on illicit trafficking.
3. Comprehend differences between proper excavation procedures vs looting of sites, recorded artifact from a known context vs an artifact without provenance seen as a work of art.
4. Present proper excavation process, documentation and handling of archaeological finds.
5. Interpret the information that an archaeological find provides in terms of its function, application, manufacturing technology, and value.

## “A TREASURE OF GOLD”

Village of Aidonia, Nemea, Greece

In the 1970's, a mule fell into a hole. Villagers discovered a rare golden treasure buried amidst skeletons. A few years later, archaeologists arrived at the looted site. 16 tombs had been emptied but a small stash of jewelry had been over- looked by the tomb robbers...

# Lesson Plan for the 'Aidonia' story

This lesson should include an oral presentation to be carried out by the teacher or museum educator and it is preferable if it is accompanied by showing objects (archaeological tools, real objects, and replicas) & photographic material related to the site.

The basic information to present is: Archaeological Research, Mycenaean Burial Customs, and the Aidonia story.

This information will be followed by:

- ❖ Showing of the movie for the Aidonia Story;
- ❖ Question and answer session and/or a group discussion;
- ❖ Mock excavation.





# 1. Archaeological Research

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## Objectives

Presentation and understanding of the basic methodology and tools applied in the field during archaeological excavation.

## Prerequisite

Definition of the terms archaeology and research.

## Learning Outcomes

To understand and emphasize the results of proper excavation process, documentation, and handling of archaeological finds.

## Description

The aim of the archaeological research is the **excavation** of sites and their contexts as well as the **study** of finds, movable or immovable. Archaeology aims to identify, assess, discover, date and interpret a **context** (building structure of private or public use, graves and tombs, pits, wells).

There are different excavation methods applied in the field, the most usual is the [‘box or grid excavation’](#). The area that will be surveyed is separated in sections of 1.5-2 m<sup>2</sup> with a grid, numerated with letters and numbers. The digging begins from the surface and continues with exploration and removal of layers to the bottom (natural rock).

The technique for digging a section is:

- Digging with machinery at a first stage
- Opening with hand tools

- Placement of marks
- Supporting the sidewalls
- Placing border limits of each section with yarn and pegs

The findings are recovered with: machinery, heavy hand tools, small hand tools, sieving and wet sieving / flotation separation.

The excavation of a section should be documented and accompanied with photographs and drawings of structures, layers and findings.

The basic equipment applied in the field for digging and recovery of finds is as follows:

Excavation Equipment (heavy and light excavation machinery, pickaxes, shovels, hoes, carts, blades, trowel, dental instruments, shieves, brushes);

Equipment for drawing and recording (tape measure, plummet, frame for grid design, scales, rulers, string, pencils, gums, nails, weights);

Equipment for recovery of findings (plastic containers, polyethylene bags, soft brushes, bulbs).

## Materials

- Photographs from excavation sites;
- Hand tools and equipment used for the recovery, drawing and recording of findings;

## References

- Peter L. Prewett, ‘Field Archaeology: An Introduction’, University College London Press, 1999



## 2. Mycenaean Burial Customs

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### Objectives

Present basic information for the type of tombs (pits and vaulted tombs: general characteristics).

Describe a typical Mycenaean burial process, the rituals, and types of burial offerings (e.g., pottery, garment ornaments, jewels, figurines).

### Prerequisite

Introduction for the Mycenaean civilization and its background.

### Learning Outcomes

Understanding the function, application, manufacturing technology, and value of Mycenaean tombs findings.

Interpretation of the information that a Mycenaean period finding and its context can bear.

### Description

The Mycenaean civilization flourished the last period of the Bronze Age (1600-1100 BC) and took its name from the ancient city of Mycenae.

Mycenae was discovered in 1876 from Heinrich Schliemann, an admirer of Homer, who found the famous Royal Tombs of the Acropolis of Mycenae.

The Mycenaean civilization is a brilliant and high level prehistoric civilization in the Aegean region with a complex financial and administrative system, expressed by: palace and urban centres, monumental arts, technology development, use of writing – [Linear B](#) is an early form of the Greek language, palace system to control production and redistribution of products.

The Mycenaeans had attained a life of some intellectual sophistication and great luxury. The massive and elegant architecture of their tombs makes these the most memorable of all Greek prehistoric monuments.

The circular type of underground tomb (vaulted tomb) is actually the easiest type of chamber tomb construction. It may be dug into the rock or covered with stones. It is easier to open and safer from the shaft graves. Sometimes simple or vertical pits were opened on the floor, covered with slabs. It was widely used as a family crypt for collective burials. It was opened many times to accept new burials and the older burials with their offerings were discarded at the edges of the shaft.

The vaulted tombs were always a challenge for tomb raiders, even since antiquity. They knew that it was not necessary to destroy the whole structure or ruin the doors, but just to slip through the [lintel](#) and enter the chamber. Thus, they have repeatedly been looted in antiquity.

A small number of intact tombs were excavated and provide information about

burial customs, change in styles and types, social stratification, weapons used similar to those described in Homer's poems.

The structural features of a typical [vaulted tomb](#) of the Mycenaean Period are:

- *Thalamos* (chamber): deep circular space dug deep into the bedrock, covered with small stone blocks;
- *Dromos*: long corridor leading from the ground surface downward to the grave;
- *Stomion*: entrance with a frame from worked large stones and a lintel, sealed by a dry wall;
- *Tholos*: dome constructed with successive circular rings with decreasing diameter.

Various tomb offerings and masks of gold that were the destiny of the affluent dead, suggest their serious beliefs about life after death.

The findings of Mycenaean tombs are symbolic representations of everyday fundamental human needs, like food and drink, dresses and decoration, entertainment (amusement). Other objects were placed to dissolve the darkness of the burial chambers and accompany the dead to their route to the underworld. Religious symbols and representations, like statuettes, ensured the protection of divine force. The achievements of males (dominating in real life) were presented in rings and [signets](#).

The grave offerings are common items such as [stirrup amphorae](#) (big sizes for oil, small sizes for perfume), [jugs](#) or [craters](#). Almost all the dead were offered a vessel for drinking. Infants were offered [pumps with spout](#). Children, who died with their mother during birth, were placed in her hands. Older children may be buried with shells filled with lead for playing. A man is accompanied usually by his knife or other type of weapon, a woman by her jewellery, or [comb](#), or other toiletry articles,

like signets.

Lamps, [braziers](#) and tableware of various types have been discovered. Sometimes males were buried with their professional equipment. Gold rings are tied with a string on the wrist. Generally, affluent burials include many gold cloth ornaments and sealing rings.

The deceased was carried to the tomb, sometimes placed on a [stretcher](#) or a [hearse](#) made by wood, covered with leather or cloth or coated with mortar. The dead was placed on the free part of the floor, completely covered with clothes and usually lying on his/her back or less commonly in fetal position. The burial shafts were of rectangular shape and the sides were roughly built to the height of the dead person's shoulders. Then the shaft was covered with soil, and slabs were placed or a roof from branches and soil. The head of the deceased may be raised with an underlying stone, and his hands were lying on the side or crossed over the belly. The deceased was usually oriented to look at the entrance. The ancestors are rejected without any care near the back or side walls to create space for new burials. The existing offerings may be taken back, but usually stay in place, especially if inexpensive. Infants are often buried in small shafts dug in the corridor (*dromos*) of the tomb.

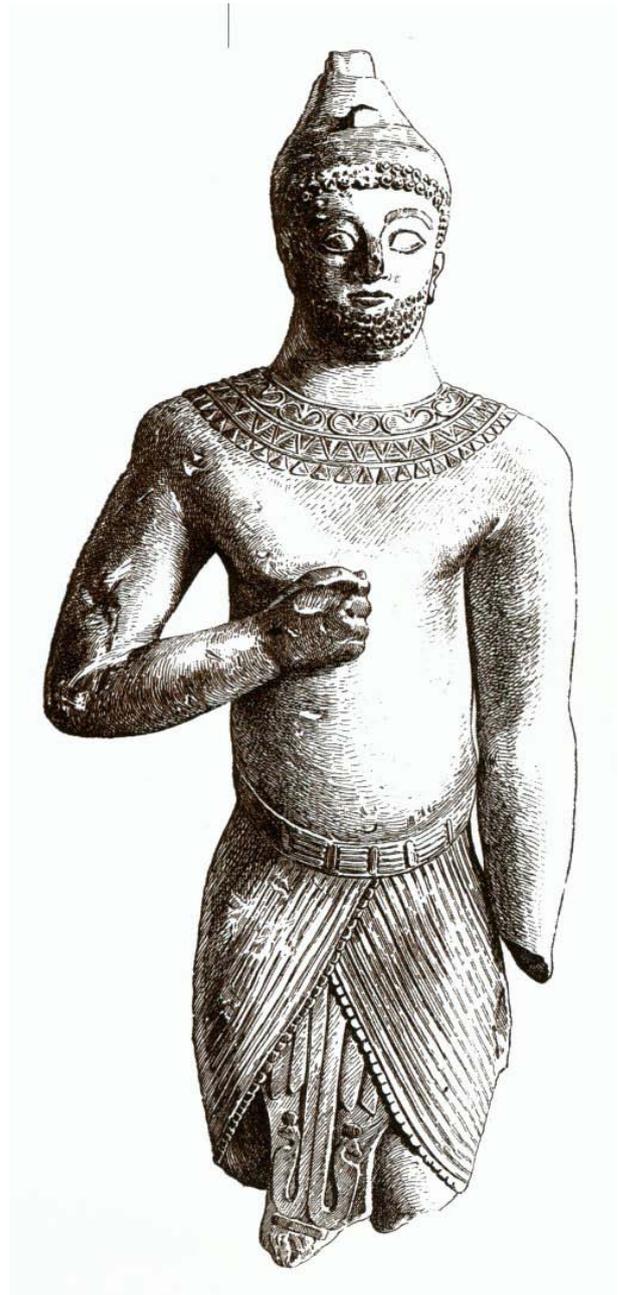
After the placement of the deceased, ceremonies with meat eating and wine drinking took place.

## Materials

- ❖ Real objects from Mycenaean tombs
- ❖ Replicas
- ❖ Photographs of Mycenaean tombs and findings

## References

- R.Higgins, "Minoan and Mycenaean Art", London and New York, Thames & Hudson 1967
- D. Kurtz & J. Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, London 1971
- A.D.Lacy, "Greek Pottery in the Bronze Age", London 1967
- P.Levi, *Atlas of the Greek World*, Time Life Books, 1990
- H. L. Lorimer, "Cremation. Homer and the Monuments", 1950 London: Macmillan, 1950.
- G.Mylonas, "Homeric and Mycenaean Burial Customs", *AJA* 52 (1948) 56
- G.Mylonas, "The Cult of the Dead in Helladic Times", *DMR* I (1951) 64 with references
- Tsountas, Chrestos, Irving, Manatt J., *The Mycenaean Age: a Study of the Monuments and Culture of Pre-Homeric Greece*, Houghton, Mifflin and Co. Boston, 1897 (Introduction by Dr. Dorpfeld)
- N.Valmin, "Tholos Tombs and Tumuli", *Acta Inst. Romani Regnii Sueciae* 2 (1932) 216
- E.Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, University of Chicago Press, 1972
- A.J.B. Wace, "Chamber tombs at Mycenae", Published 1932 by Society of Antiquaries in Oxford





### 3. The Aidonia Story Film

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#### Objectives

To comprehend the differences between proper excavation procedures vs. looting of sites, a recorded artifact from a known context vs. an artifact without provenance.

#### Prerequisite

Short introduction into the case of the 'Aidonia'.

#### Learning Outcomes

Results of proper excavation survey/ results of looting (preservation vs. destruction, understanding vs. ignorance)

#### Description

In the mid 1970's, a mule fell into a hole in the Greek village Aidonia at Nemea in Peloponnesus discovering a tomb and this is how the story of looting begins.

Villagers kept the discovery a secret and for two years they looted the tombs and they sold the artifacts to traders. Gold objects and pottery were transported via Switzerland to Munich hidden in trucks bearing watermelons, and were hidden for many years, probably in a private collection.

Several years later, archaeologists discovered the looted tombs. Only a burial pit in one of the tombs was found to be intact. The archaeologists were able to study the excavated material and to understand the burial customs of the Aidonia burial tombs.

Nonetheless, valuable information was lost forever, since the looters emptied the tombs of all major finds and left behind broken and scattered objects.

Thirteen years later the stolen goods were discovered in a small gallery in New York, ready to be sold in an auction. The excavation of one of the tombs was instrumental in identifying that the objects for auction were similar to those excavated. After a long trial, the artifacts were returned to Greece.

#### Materials

Film for the Aidonia Story

#### References

- K.Demakopoulou & N. Divari-Valakou, *The Aidonia Treasure*  
Athens: Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Receipts Fund, 1997



## 4. Question and answer session and/or a group discussion

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### Objectives

Comprehension of the values that an intact archaeological context bears;

Understanding of differences between proper excavation process vs. looting of a site and the consequences in terms of loss of information.

### Prerequisite

Background information for archaeological science and its aims and film viewing.

### Learning Outcomes

Understanding of the values and information that cultural heritage bears;

Awareness for the protection and safeguarding of sites and museums.

### Description

The educator should be able to carry out a question and answer session and/or a group discussion and be free to ask questions and set discussion topics according to the responses of the children or based to presentations assigned to the children with various relative topics (ancient Mycenaean art, values, scientific documentation and handling).

A set of questions can be asked regarding:

- Values related to the objects (based on the material, technology, use and function, information)
- Scientific and documented recovery of objects vs. looting
- Value of recording the processes
- Information from the different types of findings
- Findings with and without provenance

A group discussion can be carried out with topics regarding:

- Ancient (Mycenaean) art (types of objects and materials, use and application)
- Ancient practices and habits (everyday life, technological level, production, trade)
- Results of proper excavation survey/ results of looting (preservation vs. destruction, understanding vs. ignorance)
- Results of illicit trafficking of antiquities (loss of culture)
- Moral dimension of the problem of looting and illicit trafficking of antiquities.



## S. Mock Excavation

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### Objectives

Children acting as 'small archaeologists' in the field discovering an intact context, documenting and handling the objects, and interpreting their context based in the types, the use and the position of the offerings.

### Prerequisite

Construction of a mock excavation site or box.

### Learning outcomes

Comprehension of the value of preserving an archaeological site intact;

Application of proper excavation methods and tools;

Preservation of information and findings helps to better interpret our past.

### Description

A mock excavation should be constructed to reproduce a burial similar to the

Mycenaean period. Different types of offerings accompanying the dead could be used to create a different burial context.

### Materials

Burial box, soil, skeleton, various types of findings (real objects and/or replicas)

Hand tools and equipment for excavation, recovery and handling of artifacts



Lesson Plan for Greece and the movie

## “A TREASURE OF GOLD”

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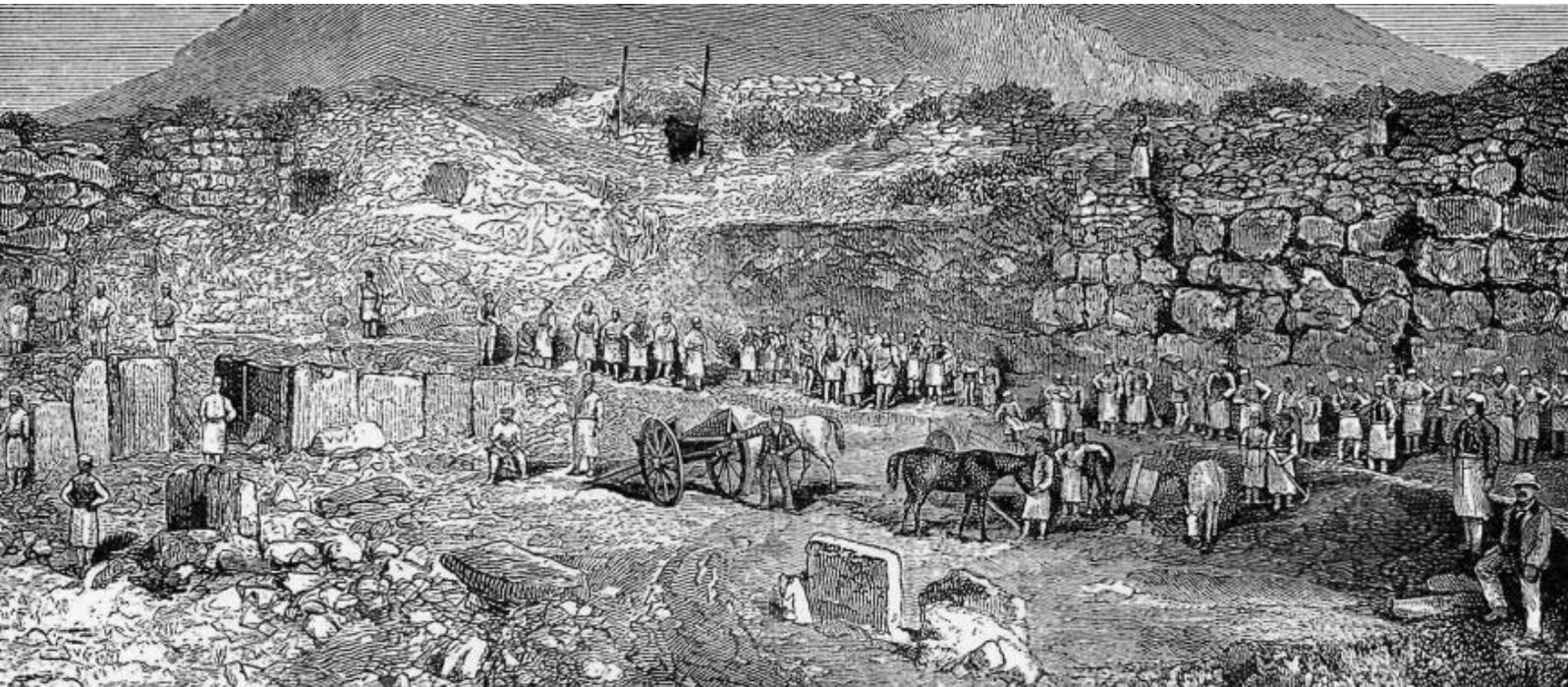
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