

A Laboratory Manual
of Classroom Activities,
Demonstrations, and
Minilabs for Introductory
Archaeology



EXPERIENCING ARCHAEOLOGY

INSTRUCTOR EDITION



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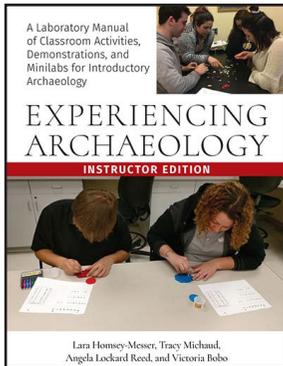
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Experiencing Archaeology: A Laboratory Manual of Classroom Activities, Demonstrations, and Minilabs for Introductory Archaeology

Lara Homsey-Messer, Tracy Michaud, Angela Lockard Reed, and Victoria Bobo, eds. 2020. [Berghahn Books](#). i–351 pp. 58 figures, 6 tables, references. \$69.95 (Paper).

Reviewed by Kaleigh Best, Teresa Palomares, and Jessica Spencer,

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This edited volume by Homsey-Messer and colleagues provides an interactive workbook for learning archaeology through the lens of broader anthropological concepts. It focuses on engaging students in hands-on learning through specific exercises meant to demonstrate the diversified range of interests that archaeologists study. Most introductory level-based lecture classes stagnate on readings or concepts that may bore or frustrate potentially interested students, often dissuading them from pursuing further study. From the start of this volume, the authors challenge these notions, and attempt to engage students in an innovative, interdisciplinary, team-oriented pursuit that mimics what real archaeologists experience in the field. In fact, they suggest that archaeology **cannot** be learned through this common traditional approach to teaching archaeology and instead **must** be learned through experiential learning.

The laboratory manual is organized in six modules, each focusing on a particular theme. Within each module, chapters are organized in a clear, logical way encompassing multiple parts of Anthropology. Within the instructor's manual, each chapter includes the purpose, intended outcomes, activity specifications, and potential modifications for younger and older students. Module one, Framework for Exploring Anthropological Archaeology, introduces the scientific method, the holistic nature of cultural anthropology, and ideas of symbolism. Module two, Attributing Meaning to Artifacts and Formation of the Archaeological Record, investigates how to interpret artifacts through the emic and etic perspectives. Module three, Frameworks for Measuring Time, discusses archaeological dating methods such as stratigraphy, seriation, tree-rings, and the geologic time scale. Module four, Exploring Archaeology Specialties, focuses on the different types of artifact analyses including lithic, ceramic, faunal, flotation, and mortuary analyses. Module five, Interpretation and Explanation in Archaeology, relates anthropological theory to the students' everyday lives to better understand the past. Module six, Ethics and Stewardship, discusses important anthropological concepts of who owns the past, NAGPRA, climate change, and laws such as the National Historic Preservation Act.

New and old generations are challenged to travel to the past through examining a wide diversity of topics, while using evidence acquired from multiple subfields to hypothesize what the past could have been like. The activities presented by the authors encourage the students to discuss, critically evaluate, and to experience the purpose of the concepts,

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allowing for a more profound understanding of the material. The way that each module is organized provides a good combination of activities, readings of important concepts, and extra resources for each lesson. Additionally, the numerous useful graphics help students to understand the topics (for example the figures used in Chapter 11: Human Stratigraphy, pp. 98 and 99).

This manual provides a comprehensive view of archaeology. However, it is missing a few important topics. Although this workbook shows different types of analyses on archaeological materials (i.e., lithic, ceramic, faunal, botanical, and mortuary materials), certain chapters are still a little typological and descriptive in nature (i.e., Chapter 17: Flaky Archaeologists: Lithic Analysis and Chapter 18: Pots and People: Ceramic Analysis). Modern techniques used in archaeological analyses, such as instrumental neutron activation analysis for example, should also be discussed. While this manual successfully points out the importance of cultural materials to investigating the past, it is missing the last step in the process of an archaeological investigation: curation. Curation is often overlooked in the planning of an archaeological project, and a chapter mentioning how important the permanent care of artifacts is should be included. As archaeology is a holistic field, the workbook also needs a concluding chapter discussing how modern archaeologists coalesce theory and methods to investigate broad questions using multiple lines of evidence to interpret the past. This could be achieved by adding a final activity where students use the skills they have learned throughout the workbook to interpret bigger questions about society or past lifeways. Finally, students could benefit from having a glossary of terms used throughout the book.

As suggested by the authors, this laboratory manual could be used on a basic level to introduce archaeological concepts to high school-level and middle school-level classes. Additionally, the authors intended it to be a supplemental tool used in lecture-based college archaeology courses, thus allowing for the students to practice those ideas being discussed. If the manual is used as an additional tool for college-level classes, it is imperative for the instructor to guide the discussions of the activities to a deeper understanding than the workbook currently allows due to its simplistic nature. Although the authors provide instructors with advice for leading lessons in the instructor's manual, deeper guidance is needed for exploring complex anthropological concepts such as classification and cultural stereotypes (i.e., Chapter 2: Cultural Bingo and Chapter 8: Button Classification). If not, the instructor runs a risk of inadvertently reinforcing negative antiquated models.

This volume's objectives were to provide an innovative way to experience introductory-level archaeology, while challenging students to integrate interdisciplinary anthropological research to understand the past. This volume mostly accomplished these goals by engaging students in a variety of activities that facilitate different styles of education (i.e., problem solving, tactile learning, critical thinking, etc.), ensuring archaeology's place as a relevant and necessary field of study. One of the important aspects to anthropology is its versatile and adaptive nature to address issues that span many fields. Although there are some shortcomings, this manual is an important step in building the bridge between STEM and the humanities, and we would recommend it to middle school, high school, and even introductory college level courses with some adaptation.