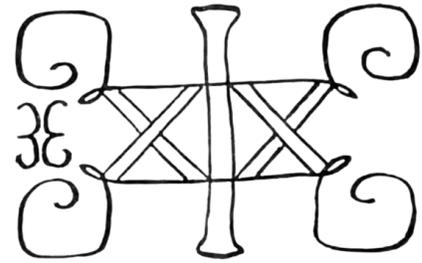


# Shell Mound Educator Guide



## Introduction

Welcome to the fascinating world of shell mounds, where we delve into the rich cultural heritage of the Wabanaki and their long history and deep connection to the lands that are now known as the state of Maine. As we embark on this educational journey, a pivotal aspect of our exploration is the profound significance of shell mounds in what is now known as the state of Maine. These archaeological sites, composed of discarded shells, bones, and artifacts that are intentionally placed as monuments on this landscape, hold invaluable insights into the lives of the Wabanaki and provide a unique intersection of both social studies and science.

Shell mounds, often referred to as “shell middens”, are scattered along the picturesque coastlines of Maine, and act as time capsules, preserving the stories and traditions of the Wabanaki. Shell mounds is the preferred name, as middens suggests that they are trash or dumping grounds, but as you’ll discover on this journey, there is more to these mounds than discarded materials. Comprising the remains of daily life, these mounds provide a tangible connection to a time long before European contact, offering a rare glimpse into the pre-colonial Wabanaki way of life. From the foods consumed to the tools crafted, each artifact narrates a tale of resourcefulness, adaptation, and a harmonious relationship between the Wabanaki and the environment.

The lessons in this unit include both social studies and science, fostering a holistic understanding of the Wabanaki culture. Through social studies, students will explore the historical context, understanding how the Wabanaki thrived in their surroundings. Simultaneously, the scientific lens provides insight into archaeological methodologies, environmental science, and the preservation of cultural artifacts.

One of the key highlights of incorporating the topic of shell mounds into our curriculum is the opportunity for hands-on learning experiences. Imagine students actively participating in simulated archaeological digs, unearthing remnants of the past. This hands-on approach not only deepens comprehension but also instills a sense of stewardship toward cultural preservation.

Studying shell mounds is not merely a reflection on history; it's a bridge connecting us to contemporary Wabanaki communities. By understanding the past, students gain insights into the resilience, traditions, and challenges faced by the Wabanaki today. This connection cultivates empathy and a more nuanced perspective on the ongoing cultural heritage of Wabanaki communities.

## Guiding Questions:

1. *What are shell mounds? What do we know about shell mounds?*
2. *What is their connection to the Nations?*
3. *What do archeologists and Tribal Preservations know about the shell mounds?*
4. *Where are shell mounds located in the State we now know as Maine?*
5. *What can shell mounds tell us about Wabanaki culture?*
6. *What are some of the theories about why they were created?*
7. *How can you preserve the shell mounds?*

## Background:

### Wabanaki Studies Framework

Shell mounds are archaeological sites that can be found along the coast of what is now called Maine, as well as in other regions with significant coastal areas. Some notable locations where shell middens have been discovered in the land now known as Maine include:

- Damariscotta River: Several shell mounds have been found along the shores of the Damariscotta River.
- Maine's midcoast region: Various shell mound sites have been identified along the midcoast region of Maine, including areas near Penobscot Bay and the Gulf of Maine.
- Down East Maine: Shell mounds have also been documented in the Down East region of Maine, near areas such as Acadia National Park and the coastal communities along the Bay of Fundy.
- Casco Bay: Some shell mound sites have been identified in the Casco Bay area, near the city of Portland and its surrounding coastal regions.

These locations represent just a few examples, as shell mounds have been discovered in numerous other coastal areas throughout what is now known as the state of Maine. These archaeological sites provide valuable insights into the historical and cultural practices of Wabanaki.

## Unit Lessons:

[Lesson 1: The Secrets of Shell Mounds in Maine](#): This lesson provides an overview of what shell mounds are and begins the conversation with students about what is known about them.

[Lesson 2: Looking at Locations of Shell Mounds in Maine](#): In this lesson, students will identify the locations of some of the more prominent shell mounds throughout what is now known as the state of Maine and discuss the geographic significance of shell mounds.

[Lesson 3: Unveiling the Wabanaki Culture Through Shell Mounds](#): Students will begin to explore the cultural importance of shell mounds to the Wabanaki.

[Lesson 4: Preserving Shell Mounds: Taking Action to Protect Wabanaki Heritage](#): In this lesson, students will gain knowledge about how they can take action to help protect Wabanaki culture through the preservation of the shell mounds.

### **Resources to refer to in unit:**

[UMaine - Midden Minders](#)

[Slideshow of photos of shell mounds from Chris Sockalexis](#) - citizen of the [Panawahpskek](#) Nation

[Hudson Museum Wabanaki Artifacts](#)

Articles:

[Old Collections, New Analyses](#)

[Maine Park's - The Whaleback Midden](#)

[Maine's History of Sea-Level Changes](#)

[More Than A Pile](#)

[Hudson Museum article](#)

[Damariscotta Oyster Shell Heaps](#)

[Alice Kelley's research - NY Times article](#)

[A History of Clamming](#)

[Wabanaki Life 1000 years ago](#)

[Damariscotta Shell Midden](#)

[The shell middens - what are they and what are they telling us?](#)

[The Indigenous Origins of the Maine Lobster Bake](#)

[Reconnecting Wabanaki Communities to Coastal History](#)

Videos:

[Hudson Museum](#)

[General shell midden info](#)

[Friendship Midden](#)

[Coastal Rivers - Wabanaki teacher training at the Whaleback Midden](#)

[Indigenous Shell Heaps, Climate Change, and Confronting Heritage Loss through Citizen Science](#)

[Bonnie Newsom - USET Climate Resilience Camp](#)

Podcasts:

[Outside In Podcast](#)

Other archaeology-related videos:

[Wabanaki knowledge, perspective, and science of Acadia](#)

[Old Collections, New Analyses - Bonnie Newsom](#)

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3: Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Social Studies - Geography & History:

Students understand how physical and human geographic characteristics of place as well as culture and experience influence people's understanding of places and regions in Maine, the Wabanaki Nations, the United States, and the world.

Students draw on concepts and processes using primary and secondary sources from history to develop historical perspectives and understand issues of continuity and change in the community, Maine, the Wabanaki Nations, the United States, and the world.

Science and Engineering:

Life Science: Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics

Engineering: Earth and Human Activity

Physical Science: Matter and Its Interactions

Media & Visual Arts:

Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work

Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding