

The Toy That Waited

AGES 3-12 · 42 PAGES · SUSAN, SOUTH-WESTERN IRAN

Aryan and Ariana are shaping animals in the sand when Homa sweeps them back to the ancient city of Susa. There they find children doing exactly what they were doing — pressing clay into little sheep, carts and figures that stayed in the ground for six thousand years.

THE BIG QUESTION — FOR EVERY STUDENT

If only some things survive being buried, how much of the past are we missing?

Ask it of the whole class. The supports below are for students who need a way in — not an easier question.

Words to know

excavate artifact clay preserve evidence

Before you read

- What is your favourite toy, and what is it made of? Would it still be here in a thousand years?

Talk about it

- Children in Susa played with tiny clay sheep and little carts with wheels. What do you play with that is a bit like that?
IF STUCK My toy is like theirs because ...
- Almost every ancient toy we find is made of clay. What does that tell us — and what might it be hiding?
IF STUCK We find clay ones because clay ... but we never find ...
- An archaeologist finds a small clay animal. How would they decide whether it was a toy or something else?
IF STUCK You could tell it was a toy if ...
- Some toys from Susa now sit in a museum thousands of miles away. Is that a good thing? Give one reason.
IF STUCK I think it is good / not good because ...

Make it

The Six-Thousand-Year Toy

30 MINUTES

Air-dry clay or plasticine, plus scrap paper, string, twigs and fabric offcuts.

Step-by-step instructions are on the student sheet overleaf — photocopy one per child.

Check they got it

Point at any object on a student's desk and ask: **would an archaeologist find this in 6,000 years?** Listen for a reason about the material, not the object — *plastic might, paper won't, clay would*. "Yes, because it's important" means the idea has not landed; importance does not preserve anything.

What students often get wrong

- ✗ That we find the most important things. We find the most *durable* things, which is not the same.
- ✗ That ancient people had few possessions. They had plenty — most were wood, cloth, leather and basketry, and all of it rotted.
- ✗ That a small figure must be a toy. It might be a decoration, an offering, or a model; archaeologists often cannot tell, and say so.

The real archaeology

- Excavations at Susa and other ancient tehes have turned up small clay animals, miniature dishes, tiny carts with working wheels and human figurines.
- Some look like sheep, cows and dolls — still recognisable as toys more than five thousand years later.
- Several Susa pieces are held at the Louvre Museum in Paris; others remain in museums in Iran.

Make a toy that lasts 6,000 years

Children in the city of Susa played with little clay sheep and carts with real wheels. Some of those toys are still here today. Yours has to survive too.

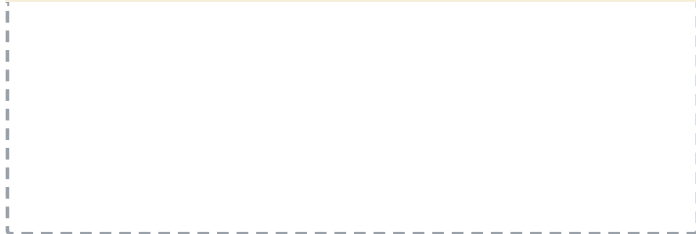
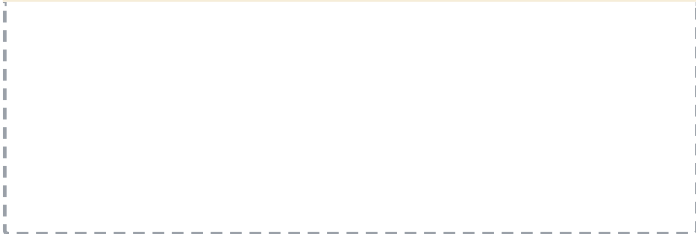
- 1 Design a toy for a child in Susa. You may **ONLY** use what they had: clay, wood, stone, bone, string and cloth.
- 2 Draw your toy in the big box. Keep it small — most real ones fit in a child's hand.
- 3 Now look at the materials you used. Write each one in the right column below.

My toy is made of:

Draw your toy here



Bury it for 6,000 years. What is left?

Still here	Rotted away
	

Now think: If only the clay parts survive, does the past look more boring than it really was?

One question I would ask the child who owned the real toy:

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Finished early? Draw the same toy as it would look after 6,000 years underground.