RESEARCHING
TO DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING

DEVELOPING CORE PROFICIENCIES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS / LITERACY UNIT

GRADE 6

RESEARCH TOPIC REPOSITORY

PREHISTORIC ART

PURPOSES AND USES OF A RESEARCH TOPIC REPOSITORY

A Research Topic Repository provides a starting point and a set of common source texts in a given topical arena for student inquiry while developing the research proficiencies that are the instructional focus of the Research for Deepening Understanding Units. The Repository suggests issues to consider in narrowing and focusing a class or student research, provides examples of possible areas of investigation that might be pursued, lists broad inquiry questions that can lead to investigative paths, and includes a set of source texts for one possible area.

The common text set models a range of text types, perspectives, and provides both background and extension texts. Background texts should be accessible to the student (relatively straightforward in approach, syntax, and language), require little background knowledge to interpret, and be comprehendible, given the student's reading skill and level. Extension texts should be rich, complex, and challenging (at the upper end of the text complexity band). They should be characteristic of texts in the field being investigated, present sophisticated arguments and/or research studies, and demand that students read closely to unpack vocabulary, syntax, and meaning.

The Repository supports and informs teacher and student decisions that are made during the research process, as described in the Researching for Deeper Understanding unit plan. The first decision is which Repository to use as a context for the unit and student research, or whether to develop a new, parallel Repository. Teachers and students should base this decision on the instructional level, curriculum context, student interests, and common text levels.

The Lexiles of the model common sources contained in this repository range from1010L to 1290 L.

ODELL EDUCATION

☰ I. INTRODUCTORY TOPIC DESCRIPTION

PREHISTORIC ART

Humans create art to express or communicate their emotions, beliefs or understandings about themselves and/or their world. Art is intentional and requires skill at using the media employed. Art is shaped by historical and social context. Art can be perceived as beautiful and aesthetically pleasing, or ugly and sinister – that depends on what the artist had in mind! And the mind that creates the art is central to a consideration of the work.

Some of the first examples of human art production were created by prehistoric peoples and are evidenced in the paintings found on rocks and inside caves around the world.

The study of cave painting is an exceptionally rich place to begin a study of art. The paintings are unquestionably beautiful and awe-inspiring. Students will enjoy examining the realistic paintings of animals on a face value level, but quickly they will see that there is so much more to investigate in order to really *see* these paintings. They will create a paradigm of research skills by learning how to identify what is necessary to know before reaching understanding, how to ask questions based on what they have read or saw, and how to synthesize that new information with the old.

Students can also explore the techniques and materials used by prehistoric artists to create these paintings, a skills they can use in future studies of other artwork.

Students will learn that understanding and appreciating cave painting involves learning about the context in which these paintings were created—and this is good practice for their future study of other artwork. Students will learn about who the anonymous artists most likely were. However, many questions should be raised about what the paintings were actually about. Were they for religious ceremonies? Did they include a language system? Were they drawing art for art's sake? Since these prehistory artists left no written information about what they intended their paintings to express, students will learn that some areas of inquiry are not resolved. They will learn that they can make hypotheses about cave paintings and artists based on their research. They will find that this information is not unambiguous and they will learn why it isn't.

By reading and comparing views on cave art by the people who first discovered the caves and by scholars who studied them in detail, students will see how the visitors' prior knowledge, beliefs, or scientific skill helped shape their interpretations of what they saw . Students will also see that scholars can disagree with each other, and they can examine why this happens. In addition to observing the paintings, students will also read about how scientists go about studying an archaeological site.

Students will also understand how different conjectures about the cave paintings could be posited by looking at the interiors of the caves in the videos, diagrams and descriptions of the physical environment of the caves.

Students will also learn about the delicate nature of these paintings that were painted between 40,000 and 12,000 years ago, and how they are currently being preserved from the damage brought by exposure to environmental contamination and human exploration.

Like the caves' discoverers, archeologists and anthropologists before them, students will take on the roll of scientist, as well as fascinated yet informed observer of these incredibly moving works of prehistoric cave art.

II. POSSIBLE AREAS OF INVESTIGATION

1. Purposes for Cave Art

2. Examining and Appreciating Cave Art (e.g., how to appreciate art, how to think about art)

3. Life and Culture during the Paleolithic Age

4. Impact of Human Exploration on the Physical Conditions within Caves

5. Why Caves Were Used as the Canvas (e.g. why not something outside)

6. Caves and Religion (e.g., shamanistic rituals, paying homage to gods)

7. Commercialization of Caves for Adventure (caves as vacation spots, tourist attractions)

8. Problems Associated with Caves (e.g., deterioration, treacherous to explore)

9. Investigation of Career Options working with Cave Art (e.g., anthropology, archaeology)

10. Exploring Caves (e.g., what resources are needed, how to find new caves)

III. POSSIBLE GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY AND RESEARCH

The following questions can be used to initiate inquiry and to guide students in identifying paths for investigation.

1. What was life like during the prehistoric times? How did prehistoric culture impact and even lead to cave art?

2. How have prehistoric cave paintings been created? What materials were used?

3. How has prehistoric cave art changed throughout history? What developments, historical events, or cultural beliefs impacted this change?

4. How can novices learn to analyze and appreciate cave art?

5. How have humans impacted the physical condition of caves? What efforts are being done to help preserve caves from deterioration?

6. Why did humans paint on cave walls? What evidence exists that helps explain why cave art was done?

7. How do researchers use cave art to learn about prehistoric times?

8. How does cave art in Europe compare to art in other parts of the world? What similarities exist? Differences? In what ways have researchers used the cave art around the world to make sense of historic times?

9. How is cave art viewed and discussed by academics in related fields? What are the academic debates surrounding its development and use?

10. What career options and opportunities are related to anthropology and/or archaeology? How might someone learn about and pursue those options?

IV. SOURCE LOCATIONS

In conducting research, students should be encouraged to conduct searches for sources in a variety of areas such as the school library, visits to and observations of sites and places related to the topic, search engines like Google and Bing, and on-line databases like EBSCO Host and Gale. In expanding the circle of potential resources for research, and in realigning their strategic searches, students should utilize the expertise of library-media specialists in their school or community, and learn from them how to access additional search vehicles that may be available to them.

Many state and school district library systems provide free public access to research portals that allow teachers and students to access various informational databases. Many of these have been organized so that articles can be searched for by text difficulty level (Lexile measure) as well as topic, allowing both teachers and students to find information at a variety of text complexity levels. Some national content aggregators that provide searches by Lexile level are: EBSCO, Gale, Grolier Online, Net Trekker, News Bank, Pro Quest, and Questia. Contact a library-media specialist for information on how to connect students to and navigate the state's database access.

V. COMMON SOURCE TEXT SET

The common text set for this Repository presents a model text sequence focused on a particular area of investigation; the common text set can be used in various ways by a teacher and students, depending on the degree to which they want to focus inquiry and research on the areas of investigation suggested by the texts in the set. Each common text is linked to a specific reading activity in the unit plan, and each includes a short set of text notes and a set of text-based questions to initiate students' close reading. The model sources in this repository can be used in a variety of ways including:

1. **Provide background and direction for inquiry focused on the area of investigation:** In this case, students will read and analyze the common texts either as main sources or as a research base as they embark on inquiry and investigation directly related to the area(s) of investigation presented in the texts. They will develop the close reading skills required for effective research through text-based discussions and analysis of the common texts, as explained in the unit plan. Students may then extend their individual research into closely related areas and new texts.

2. **Provide skills practice and a starting point for students' research:** In this case, students will work with the text set to learn about and practice the close reading skills required for effective research, but will then conduct research into a related, but new area of investigation identified by the teacher or students, applying those same skills with new texts.

3. **Serve as models for the teacher:** In this case, the teacher may identify other, similar texts in a chosen area of investigation and build a new or expanded common text set, which parallels the model set in terms of breadth, richness, and complexity. Students will develop the close reading skills required for effective research using the teacher's new common text set and will launch either teacher- or student-directed inquiry in a new area of investigation area suggested by the texts in the set.

V. COMMON SOURCE TEXT SET (CONT'D)

The general text characteristics and their *sequential use in the unit's activities* are outlined below:

Text #1 - *Stimulus*:

Rich, high interest text that can stimulate student thinking and discussion in the general topic area and lead the class or a student to consider various areas of investigation. Might be a literary text.

Students will use this text as a jumping off point for inquiry in **Part 1, Activity 2.**

Text #2 - *Background information*:

Accessible informational text providing accurate background information on an identified area. Characteristics – rich, quality, credibility, connection to the inquiry. Should be a quality source of rich information on central aspects of topic. Should frame an area in a way that can lead to many paths of exploration, rather than a single perspective or focus.

Students will use this text to build background and practice skills of close reading and initial text analysis (for credibility, accessibility, and relevance) in **Part 1, Activity 3, and Part 2, Activities 2-3.**

Text #3 - *Background information*:

Accessible informational text providing additional and complementary accurate background information related to an identified area of investigation.

Students will use this text to build background and practice skills of close reading and initial text analysis (for credibility, accessibility, and relevance) in **Part 1, Activity 3, and Part 2 Activities 2-3.**

Text #4 - *Perspective on the Topic:*

Short, but potentially more challenging informational text that presents or suggests a particular perspective on an identified area of investigation. Should come from a credible source.

Students will use this text to identify one of multiple ways of viewing the identified area of investigation, to practice close reading skills of analyzing perspective and bias, and to compare with other perspectives in **Part 2, Activities 2-3.**

Text #5 - *Perspective on the Topic:*

Short, but more challenging informational text that presents or suggests a second or contrasting perspective on an identified area of investigation. Might come from a less known source with uncertain credibility.

Students will use this text to identify one of multiple ways of viewing the identified area of investigation, to practice close reading skills of analyzing perspective and bias, and to compare with other perspectives in **Part 2, Activities 2-3.**

Text #6 - *Perspective on* the *Topic:*

Short informational text related to an identified area of investigation that presents or suggests an additional or contrasting perspective. Might come from an unusual source with uncertain credibility.

Students will use this text to identify one of multiple ways of viewing the identified area of investigation, to practice close reading skills of analyzing perspective and bias, and to compare with other perspectives in **Part 2, Activity 2-3.**

Texts #7 - #10 - *Arguments and Perspectives related to the Topic:*

Longer and more complex informational texts related to an identified area of investigation with rich content, a clear perspective, and effective, well-developed argumentation.

Students will use this text to deepen their understanding of the identified area of investigation and the issues, debates, and controversies that surround it, and to practice the close reading skills of analyzing arguments, their reasoning, and their supporting evidence in **Part 3, Activity2.**

NOTE: the teacher or students may supplement this text set with additional examples of academic writing from fields related to the area of investigation.

PREHISTORIC ART: CAVE PAINTING

Text Complexity Range: 1010L to 1290 L

AUTHOR	DATE	LEXILE
Text #1: Chauvet Cave Paintings: Paleolithic Art, 32000 BC		
NA	January 2, 2013	NA
Text #2 (Title 1): The Lascaux Cave Virtual Tour		
French Ministry of Culture (available in English)	NA	NA
Text #2 (Title 2): Lascaux Cave Paintings - An Introduction		
Bradshaw Foundation	2011	1180L
Text #3: The Cave at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc		
Website maintained by the French government with an English translation	NA	NA
Text #4 (Title 1): Cave and Rock Art		
The Blackbirch Encyclopedia of Science & Invention	2001	1130L
Text 4 (Title 2): Hands Across Time		
Mary Reina	2008	1010L
Text #5: Why Did Prehistoric People Make Cave Art?		
Adam Benton	July 23, 2013	1080L
Text #6: Cave Art Found: Was It A Prehistoric Preschool?		
Deepa Gopal	October 10, 2011	1290L
Text #7: Origins of Religion		
Frank E. Smitha	2009-2013	1020L
Text #8: Ancient Cave Behavior		
Emily Sohn	October 24, 2007	1120L
Text #9: Neaderthals: The Oldest Cave Painters		
Interview by Ira Flatow	June 15, 2012	1120L
Text #10: Stone Age Jottings		
New Scientists	February 20, 2010	NA

TEXT #1

Chauvet Cave Paintings: Paleolithic Art, 32000 BC
Video slide show

Date: January 2, 2013 / **Complexity Level:** NA

TEXT NOTES
The study of prehistoric cave painting does not begin with a text about the art; rather it begins with presentation of actual prehistoric cave paintings. The study of a work of art commences with a close reading of the artwork just as the study of text begins with a close reading of the text. Close reading of an artwork requires students to overview the whole work and then to examine its construction and component details. The artist's craft demonstrated in the artwork must be studied in a manner parallel to the way a writer's craft is examined in a text. Every aspect of the artwork is deliberate and necessary for the impact of the whole work. The teacher should avoid scaffolding student experience of artworks by providing them with a detailed context for the art under examination. Students should have the opportunity to interact with the primary document, which in in the study of art is actual artwork. This video highlights the artwork created in the Chauvet Caves in France between 32,000-30,000 BC. Students viewing this five-minute clip will be introduced to the many different animals depicted by prehistoric artists. This provides an opportunity for students to begin contemplating why animals were the chosen subjects and not others. Students should naturally have questions that they may wish to investigate after viewing. Using a video as an initial text provides students the opportunity to examine details closely. Instead of just focusing on the different animals depicted, challenge students to pick out the specific details of the animals and surmise why the artist chose to capture them in a specific pose or focused on a specific detail.

Sample Artwork-Dependent Questions (to drive initial close reading of the paintings and discussion:

1.   What stands out to you as you watch the video of the cave art?

2.   What different topics are depicted in the art?

3.   Which body parts seem to be the focus of the author's work? Why is this the case?

TEXT #2

(a paired text set)

The Lascaux Cave Virtual Tour

http://www.lascaux.culture.fr

Date: Not identified (but currently posted on website as of September 2013)

Complexity Level: NA

Lascaux Cave Paintings - An Introduction
The Bradshaw Foundation

Date: 2011

Complexity Level: 1180L

TEXT NOTES

This virtual tour provides students with a compelling introduction to prehistoric cave paintings that speak for themselves! Questions for further research can be made based upon examination of the cave paintings form, content, and context. This website provides much information regarding the location of the caves, their discovery, and their maintenance; however these parts of the site should not be explored at this introductory point. The paired text from the The National Park Service provides an introductory reading for students that explains the work of archaeologists

Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive initial close reading of the virtual tour and text):

Following the virtual tour of Lascaux cave and reading the Bradshaw text, the following types of questions could be generated through an artwork-based discussion.

1. What impressed you about the paintings you just viewed? (Art Form)

   a. Are these paintings realistic?

   b. How did the artists use the contours of the cave walls to enhance their paintings?

   c. Are the paintings telling a story?

   d. When do you think these paintings were created? Why?

2. What are the subjects of the Lascaux paintings? (Art Content)

   a. Why did these artists paint animals?

   b. What animals are painted in Lascaux cave?

   c. Why did the artists choose to depict these animals rather than other animals?

   d. Why are there no paintings of nature in Lascaux cave?

   e. Why are there no paintings of people in Lascaux cave?

3. Why would people paint inside a cave? (Art Context)

   a. What would be the advantages of painting inside a cave?

   b. What would be the disadvantages of painting inside a cave?

   c. What reasons would cause people to paint inside a cave?

4. What purpose did the Lascaux cave paintings serve?

   a. Why were they painted?

   b. Who saw these paintings?

5. How were these paintings made?

   a. What were they painted with?

   b. What techniques did the artists use?

6. What process to archaeologists follow when investigating a new site for artifacts?

TEXT #3

The Cave at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc

http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/chauvet/en/

Date: NA

TEXT NOTES
This website provides information regarding the discovery of this cave, the authentication of the age of the paintings, and issues regarding their preservation. But, more importantly, it includes a number of accounts by people from diverse fields of study who visited the caves. These accounts can be edited and presented to students. The website contains videos, graphics, and texts which can be understood by students. Some of the texts require close reading in class with the teacher selecting pertinent accessible paragraphs for examination and discussion.   Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive initial close reading and discussion):   1.   How was the Chauvet cave discovered?   2.   How is the age of the cave art determined?   3.   How can the cave art be preserved?   4.   What does the cave space look like?   5.   Where are prehistoric cave paintings found? What are the characteristics of the caves?

TEXT #4

(a paired text set)

Cave and Rock Art
By The Blackbirch Encyclopedia of Science & Invention

Date: 2001 / **Complexity Level:** 1130L
(This source can be found by using the Gale Virtual Reference Library)

Hands Across Time
By Mary Reina

Date: 2008 / **Complexity Level:** 1010L
(This source can be found by using the Gale Virtual Reference Library)

TEXT NOTES

The first text is an encyclopedia entry that explains how cave paintings were made, when they were made, and provides an entry point into discovering why prehistoric man risked their lives to create these cave paintings. The second text provides additional details into how cave paintings were actually produced. Both of these texts allow students to investigate the process used to create cave paintings and naturally open the conversation to the question of why did prehistoric man spend time in caves painting these pictures?

Sample Text-Dependent Questions

1. What was the process used to create the earliest examples of stenciled hands?

2. How does Mary Reina describe the journey artists would take into and through the caves?

3. Mary Reina admires prehistoric artists for their "courage, imagination and artistry." Which details from the text lead her to this conclusion?

ODELL EDUCATION

TEXT #5

Why Did Prehistoric People Make Cave Art?
By Adam Benton

Date: July 23, 2013 / **Complexity Level:** Measures at 1080L

TEXT NOTES

In this blog, Adam Benton, a student of evolutionary anthropology at the University of Liverpool provides a witty review of the leading scientific views of why prehistoric man created cave paintings. The complexity level of this blog makes it readable for middle school students and Benton's humor provides an engaging yet straightforward review. Despite being an undergraduate student, Benton's claims are well researched and he provides citations for his evidence which models good practice for students to see that even in a blog, supporting evidence adds credibility.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions:

1.   In what ways does Benton describe prehistoric cave art as "being simultaneous distinctly human and incredibly alien?"

2.   What evidence does Benton provide that helps to dispel the opinion held by many that cave art "was the prehistoric equivalent of a doodle?"

TEXT #6

Cave Art Found: Was It A Prehistoric Preschool?
By Deepa Gopal

Date: October 10, 2011 / **Complexity Level:** Measures at 1290L

TEXT NOTES

This text presents the viewpoint that some artwork present in many prehistoric cave sites may have been the works of young children. While the lexile level of this text is somewhat high for middle school, the text is accessible for these students. Students should closely read the article to understand the evidence supporting Gopal's claim and how archaeologists are measuring the dates of the artwork.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive initial close reading and discussion):

1.   What evidence from the text supports Gopal's claim that young children were responsible for some of the artwork found in caves?

2.   What claim is supported by the following evidence, "To her delight, Van Gilder found an area of the cave that was dedicated completely to finger art by children?"

TEXT #7

Origins of Religion
By Frank E. Smitha

Date: 2009-2013 / **Complexity Level:** Measures at 11020L

TEXT NOTES

This text provides a very accessible narrative of how Paleolithic humans experienced the world around them. Smitha describes how early humans must have experienced religion and gods. While this description does not directly address caves or art specifically, an opportunity exists for students to use the information here to draw their own conclusions about why these same people chose to decorate caves in the manner they did.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive initial close reading and discussion):

1. What words and phrases does the author use to describe how Paleolithic humans thought about religion?

2. Based on the claims and evidence presented in this text, why might have Paleolithic humans spent the time and effort necessary to venture into caves and create paintings on the walls?

TEXT #8

Ancient Cave Behavior
By Emily Sohn

Date: October 24, 2007 / **Complexity Level:** Measures at 1120L
(This source can be found by using the Gale Virtual Reference Library)

TEXT NOTES

This text challenges the assumption held by many researchers that modern human behavior manifested itself as recently at 45,000 years ago. Sohn provides evidence from caves in South African that point to early humans exhibiting signs of advanced thought as early as 285,000 years ago. While the complexity level of this text is somewhat high for middle school, each paragraph generally consists of 1-2 sentences which provides a natural scaffold for students.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions :

1. What claim does Sohn state concerning early human behavior?

2. What evidence does she provide supporting this claim?

TEXT #9

Neaderthals: The Oldest Cave Painters
By Ira Flatow

Date: June 15, 2012 / **Complexity Level:** Measures at 1120L

TEXT NOTES

While the complexity level of this interview's text is somewhat high for middle school students, there is an option through the NPR website to listen to the interview. This interview provides evidence to suggest that Neanderthals may have been more advanced in their ability to think and reason than previously thought. This text provides another perspective on why early man chose to paint on cave walls including the perspective that some of the cave paintings being from earlier times than originally believed.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions:

1.   What evidence supports the claim that some caves may have been used as sites for prehistoric art schools?

2.   What does interviewee Alistair Pike mean when he makes the following claim, "There's only one instance when we've actually discovered something that no one else has ever seen before?"

TEXT #10

Stone Age Jottings
By New Scientists

Date: February 20, 2010 / **Complexity Level:** NA

TEXT NOTES

This graphic should be used as the final text in this repository. The accompanying article http://www.sott.net/article/203166-The-writing-on-the-cave-wall is too complex for middle school students; however, teachers should read the article and refer to its content to introduce the graphic to students. The article is about Canadian researcher, Genevieve von Petzinger from Canada, who has compiled cave drawings from around the world. Because similar symbols are found in caves that were used by different peoples, von Petzinger proposes that these symbols could have been an early form of communication.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions:

1.   In which parts of the world are scientists find the most symbols written in caves?

2.   The "line" is found in 70% of sites surveyed. How is von Petzinger using this as evidence to support her claim?

VII. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES RELATED TO PREHISTORIC ART

What is art?
Dr. Robert J. Belton, professor of Art History at the University of British Columbia, Canada.
This brief introduction to the professor's art history course presents a list of the attributes of a work of art. Students can discuss a selection of this list in order to decide how to characterize the cave paintings.
Lexile Measure: 1360L

The Artist's Toolkit
The Artist's Toolkit provides an interactive opportunity for students to learn the basic elements of visual design: color, line—line, edge & outline; color—primary & secondary, warm & cool, complementary, natural & arbitrary, tints & shades; shape—geometric & organic; balance—symmetrical & asymmetrical; movement/rhythm—visual rhythm, repetition makes a pattern. Students need to spend time at this site to learn the academic vocabulary of art so they can clearly speak and write about the artwork they study closely.

The Skill of Describing
This video exemplifies the ways that a student can look at a painting in order to depict it in words.
Text Complexity: This is a video presentation of appropriate difficulty for students

French cave paintings and rock art archive
This website presents many excellent examples of cave paintings for students to use in their application of the basic elements of visual design in their examination of these artwork.

Debate Over Moldy Cave Art Is a Tale of Human Missteps
Molly Moore, July 1, 2008
The paintings at Lascaux have been preserved for possibly 20,000 years because the cave was closed up and neither people nor outside air could get inside it. With its rediscovery, the cave has become vulnerable to damage from both humans and exposure to outside air. Attempts are being made to preserve the caves.
Lexile Measure: 1310L

The Chauvet Cave
Individual academics and writers reaction to the Chauvet Cave. There are many insights here that could be used in class discussions by excerpting pertinent paragraphs from these texts for students to read closely. See the comments by Paul Begouen, Bruce Beasley, George Chaloupka, Margaret Conkey, Joelle Robet Lamblin, John Robinson, David Lewis Williams.

The Cave of Altamira
José Antonio Lasheras
A detailed examination of the Altamira cave encompassing all aspects.
Lexile Measure: 1430L

Early Modern Human Culture
Dr, R. Quinlan, Professor, Washington State University
A very thorough introduction to this era and the cave art.

New Women of the Ice Age
Heather Pringle
This article presents information about the role of women in the ice age based on excavations of prehistoric sites.
Lexile Measure: 1410L

The Altamira Cave
This website presents information regarding the discovery of the Altamira cave

The Altamira cave
This site presents material on the discovery of Altamira cave, its reception, has photos of the art.

Chauvet Cave
This website provides another look and resources into this amazing cave in France.

Lascaux Cave Paintings-An Introduction
The second website is provided by the Bradshaw Foundation which provides online learning resources focusing on archaeology, anthropology, and genetic research.