



Bead Timeline

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Grade Level: 4 & Up

Subject(s): Social Studies,
Visual Art

Key Terms:

- Archaeological Record
- Archaeology
- Chronological Order
- Indigenous
- Paleoindian Period
- Prehistoric
- Shell Mounds
- Timeline

Florida State Standards:

SS.4.A.1.1

SS.4.A.9.1

VA.4.S.1.3

SS.5.A.1.2

Summary:

Students will use beads to mark significant moments in Florida history on a string timeline to create a visual representation of history. They will be able to see the shift from prehistory to written history by looking at how close together or far apart the beads for different events are.

Objectives:

Students will identify major periods of cultural change in Florida history. Through this lesson, they will see the differences between the time periods for which we have written records and the prehistoric period when we only have knowledge due to the archaeological record.

Materials:

- String, Yarn, or Hemp
- Scissors
- Bowls of Beads of different colors
 - Examples:
 - Gray = Stone Bead – Paleoindian Period
 - Pink = Shell – Shell mounds constructed
 - Orange = Clay – Pottery
 - Blue = Calusa start building their village site where the Mound House is today
 - Purple = Spanish arrival – written documents become part of the historic record
 - Red = American Revolution – start of a new nation
 - Green = Present day



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Background:

The oldest evidence of humans living in Florida date back over 14,500 years ago. The **Paleoindian Period** refers to a time approximately 15,000 years ago when humans first appeared in the **archeological record** (the collective body of physical evidence about humans of the past) in North America.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans to the land named La Florida by Ponce de Leon for its abundance of flowers, no written records existed detailing the lives of the indigenous people living there. **Indigenous** people are the first people who lived in any region. According to the United Nations [*Indigenous Peoples Factsheet*](#), indigenous peoples are the holders of unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs and possess invaluable knowledge of practices for the sustainable management of natural resources. They have a special relation to and use of their traditional land.

Nearly all the knowledge we have of Florida's **prehistoric** (relating to or existing in the time before written history) peoples has been gained through archaeological investigation. Archaeologists can find approximate points in the archaeological record that indicate social, cultural, and/or environmental changes. **Shell mounds** constructed of discarded shells and other materials (called midden) are studied by archaeologists in an effort to learn about the people who built the mounds long ago along the coast.

A **timeline** is one way to display these events visually in the order that they occurred, or **chronological order**. Timelines are divided into equally measured segments which correspond with a specific period of time. For example, one centimeter equals 500 years. The left end of the timeline represents the oldest events and the right end represents the most recent events. Archaeologists can use timelines to see relationships between events and recognize patterns.

Procedure:

- Overview: Students will be placing beads at particular points on a string that correspond with moments in Florida's prehistory and history. The string will serve as the timeline, showing 15,000 years of Florida history.
- Each student receives a copy of the Timeline Printout (separate doc).
- Students cut a piece of string that is slightly longer than the entire timeline.
- Students tie a knot at one end of the string. This point will serve as the beginning of human occupation in Florida.
- Explain to the students that the string represents 14,500 years of Florida's history. The beads will be placed at certain points on the string that mark a time period of significant change.
- Tell the students that the earliest evidence archaeologists have found of humans in Florida are stone tools and carved mastodon bones over 14,500 years old. We call these people Paleoindians. To represent them on our timeline we will use a **gray bead** (gray like stone).
- Tie another knot after the bead so it stays in place.



- Have the students line up their string with the timeline and ask them to tie a knot at the next point on the timeline that represents when the first shell mounds were built in Florida, 7,000 years ago. Students now place a **pink bead** (pink like the inside of a conch) on the string and then tie a knot after it.
- Students tie a knot at 5,000 years and add an **orange bead** to represent when clay first appears in Florida. Tie another knot after the bead so it stays in place.
- Students tie a knot at 2,000 years and add a **blue bead** to represent when the Calusa started living at the site we know call the Mound House. Tie another knot after the bead so it stays in place.
- Next have the students tie a knot at 500 years and add a **purple bead** to represent Spanish arrival. Maps, memoirs and ship's logs become part of the written history of Florida at this time. Tie a knot after the bead so it stays in place.
- Next have the students tie a knot at 250 years ago and add a **red bead** to represent the American Revolution. Tie a knot after the bead so it stays in place.
- Next have the students tie a knot at Present Day and add a **green bead**. Tie a knot after the bead so it stays in place.

Classroom Discussion:

Once the bead timelines are completed, facilitate classroom discussion by asking questions such as:

1. How much of Florida's past we know about through archaeology.
2. How much of Florida's past do we know about through written history?
3. Why are there gaps in what we know?
4. Compare the time that Europeans have occupied Florida with the time Native Americans occupied Florida.

Key Words:

- Archaeological record - the collective body of physical evidence about humans of the past
- Archaeology – the study of people and cultures from the past through material evidence
- Chronological order – arranged in the order in which things happened
- Indigenous – refers to the first to live in any region
- Paleoindian Period - refers to a time approximately 15,000 years ago when humans first appeared in the archaeological record
- Prehistoric – relating to or existing in the time before written history
- Shell mounds – collection of discarded shells and other hard materials, often left behind by people who lived near the coast and consumed shellfish
- Timeline – a visual display showing historical events in the order that they happened