

Commemorative Ware Puzzle

When you commemorate something, it means that you are remembering it in a special way. Commemorative ware is a name used by archaeologists to describe the decorative type of pottery that is made to celebrate or honor a particular event or person, or to celebrate historic and scenic scenes. Put your artifact mending skills to the test by designing your own commemorative vessels (cup and plate), cutting them into pieces, and then putting them back together again.

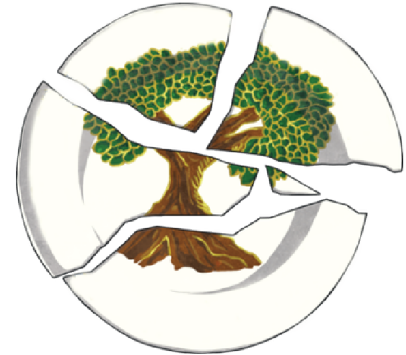
What you will need:

Materials Provided in the Kit

- Paper plate
- Paper cup

Materials from Home

- Scissors
- Clear adhesive tape
- Colored markers



Make your puzzle

1. **Design your commemorative ware.** Decide what you would like to commemorate this year. The design is completely up to you! Maybe you'd like to remember a fun day that you had, a person that is important to you, or maybe a design that shows a new hobby that you started this year. Use colored markers to decorate the cup and plate with two different designs. *Tip: Cover as much of the white space as you can, including the edge or rim. That will make it easier to put back together again.*
2. **“Break” your vessel.** Archaeologists rarely find a whole ceramic vessel in the ground. Use scissors to cut the plate and cup into five or six pieces. Mix the pieces of both vessels together.
3. **Sort your sherds.** The process of putting pieces of broken vessels back together again is called mending. Every broken ceramic piece, or “sherd,” is first sorted by the type and decoration to figure out which pieces belong to which vessel. Sort your pieces into two vessel piles based on the type (plate or cup) and decoration.
4. **Crossmend!** Archaeologists use non-damaging tape to temporarily hold broken ceramic sherds in place. Put each vessel together again by matching each piece and then taping them together. *Hint: Start from the bottom, or “base”, of the vessel and work your way up to the top, or out to the rim.*

Take it further. Test your mending skills with real ceramics!

1. Ask for permission to break a plate, bowl, or mug that is no longer being used. Coffee mugs with a design work well. Porcelain is not recommended because the broken edges are too sharp.
2. Put the vessel inside of a ziptop bag, and then put the sealed bag into a brown paper bag or old pillow case. Tie up or seal the outer bag carefully.
3. Break the ceramic by either dropping it onto concrete or by hitting it with a hammer.
4. Carefully open the bag and remove the pieces.
5. Piece them back together again using scotch or masking tape. *Tip: Sort the pieces into base (bottom), rim (edge pieces), and body (middle pieces). Work by first putting together the base peices, and then working up through the body pieces until you reach the rim.*



Alexandria Commemorative Ware

Archaeologists study objects that people have left behind to learn more about what people's lives were like in the past. Archaeologists can learn a lot about when they commemorative ware objects were made, and what the people who used them may have considered important to remember and celebrate.

Commemorative wares became popular in American during the colonial period. Early examples found in Alexandria by archaeologists commemorate war victories and heroes. After the Revolutionary War, commemorative ware in Alexandria celebrates patriotic scenes and people. As Alexandria grew, they began to feature important city landmarks, including historic Christ Church and the Carlyle House. Today, we continue to make ceramics to commemorate special events or milestones. Do you have any ceramics or other objects in your home that celebrate something?

Examples of Alexandria Commemorative Ware



*Rockingham pitcher or teapot, 1845-1900
Commemorating George Washington
Excavated: 809 Duke Street,
Alexandria, VA*



*American eagle plate, 1815-1830
Commemorating the new nation
Excavated: Arell's Tavern (44AX94),
Alexandria, VA*



*Ellsworth pitcher, 1861
Memorializing Colonel Ellsworth
Courtesy: Alexandria's History
Museum at the Lyceum*



*Pitcher fragment, England, ca. 1815
Celebrating America's merchant economy
Excavated: McKnight's Tavern (44AX93),
Alexandria, VA*



*Carlyle House souvenir plate, early 20th c.
Commemorating Gen. Braddock's 1755 stay
Courtesy: Alexandria's History Museum at
the Lyceum*



*Mug, 1999, Celebrating the city's
250th anniversary
Courtesy: Historic Alexandria*

