

Forensics and Anthropology Activity Guide

Teeth Trends Around the World



Some **Japanese** cultures dye their teeth black, as a sign of nobility.

Bantu tribes along the **Congo River** file their front teeth into sharp points.

Some **Australian** tribes deliberately knock out teeth as a sign of mourning.

In **America**, it has become popular to install gold crowns on teeth as a vehicle for self-expression.

Can you think of other cultures that alter their teeth?

Teeth through History

Etruscans installed gold bands on front teeth 800-500 BC →

Mayan front teeth had precious stone implants (jadeite and turquoise) 900 AD

In the Elizabethan period, people whitened teeth with acid 1550-1600



Story of Agrippa

In 66AD a woman named Agrippa feared that another woman, Lollia Paulina, may have been competing for the love of Claudius, emperor of Rome. Agrippa sent soldiers to kill Lollia and bring back her head. It goes that she was sure that the head was Lollia's by the way her teeth looked.

Why might this story be important to the beginning of forensic dentistry?

Teeth and the Animal Kingdom

Teeth first appeared on mollusk's 420 million years ago. Teeth help us understand how animals ate, which helps us understand how they lived!

In the museum, find...

- Fossil shark tooth (*Carcharodon rondeletii*)
- Otter (*Lutra vulgaris*) skull
- Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) skull
- Rabbit (*Oryctologus cuniculus*)

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- Elephant's tooth (*Elephas maximus*)
- Human mandible from ancient Egypt- shows wear from sand grains and milled flour

Which mandibles resemble each other on the wall? What do you think this says about how closely related those species might be?

History of Forensic Dentistry

Paul Revere had a brief career as a dentist. He had his own practice in Boston in the 1700s, before the Revolutionary War. He was a silversmith, and often fitted people for false teeth.

One of his patients, Dr. Joseph Warren, was killed during one of the first battles of the Revolution. Paul Revere identified Warren's body after it had decomposed, as he was able to recognize the ivory teeth that he had made for him.

The National Museum of Health and Medicine identified this as "one of the earliest cases of forensic evidence used to identify a fallen American soldier."



Abraham Lincoln, 16th U.S. president was shot by John Wilkes Booth. The U.S. Cavalry executed Booth in a barn and then burned it down, though there were many rumors that he had actually escaped, and was still alive.

To put an end to these rumors, Booth's body was exhumed and the family dentist identified him using his dental records.



Your Spitting Image, The Human Genome Project: Mouth Edition

Teeth, bite marks, and DNA are used in forensic investigations today. *Forensic odontologists* use their expertise to help identify unknown remains by tracing bitemarks, taking impressions, and using x-rays. They work with police, investigators, and coroners.

Name a situation in which a forensic odontologist could help:

What can you estimate using just someone's teeth?

- Age
- Gender
- Race