

Artifacts: Piecing Together the Past

The study of artifacts is one of the primary ways archaeologists learn about how people lived in the past. Artifacts are things made by people. Understanding where things were made, what they were used for, and who used them and why, can help to answer questions about a particular time and place. Try your hand at reconstructing an artifact from archaeological excavations at the Van Cortlandt Manor House located in the Bronx, New York City.

What you will need

- Computer printer
- Scissors
- Tape, glue stick, or glue
- Paper, cardboard, or paper bag to assemble the mended artifact on

Step 1: Excavate your vessel

Begin by cutting out the “sherds” (the broken pieces) of this ceramic (fired clay) artifact excavated from the Van Cortlandt Manor House.

Step 2: Reassemble your vessel

Identify the rim or edges of the artifact like you are doing a jig-saw puzzle and sort them from the middle (or body) sherds. Then work from the known to the unknown. In other words, start with the outside edges and work toward the middle.

Step 3: Glue your vessel

Once you think you have the pieces of vessel arranged in their appropriate places, start gluing!

Step 4: Identification

To finish solving the puzzle and identify this object search for it in the Van Cortlandt Archaeological Project in the online collections of the New York City Archaeological Repository:

<http://archaeology.cityofnewyork.us/linker/collection/4/2>

Locate the Van Cortlandt site on the city map. Read about the project. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and look for the “15723” artifacts excavated from the site. Can you find it? Explore the pictures—can you find the artifact that you pieced together? Look carefully, it may look just like another! Try your hand at answering the questions on the next page.

Object Cataloging Form

What is it?

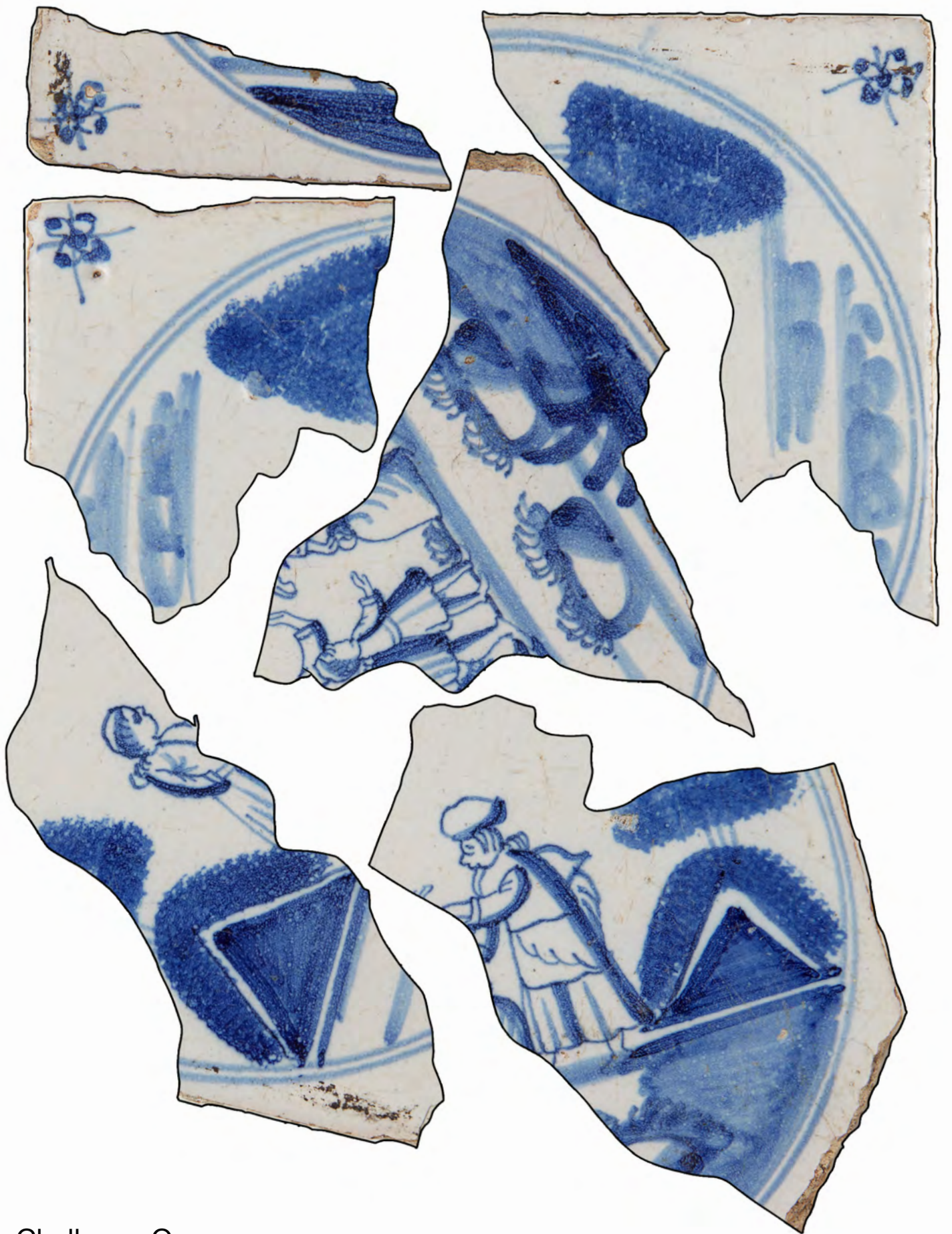
What is it made of?

How old is it?

How do you think the Van Cortlandt family used it?

What country was it made in?

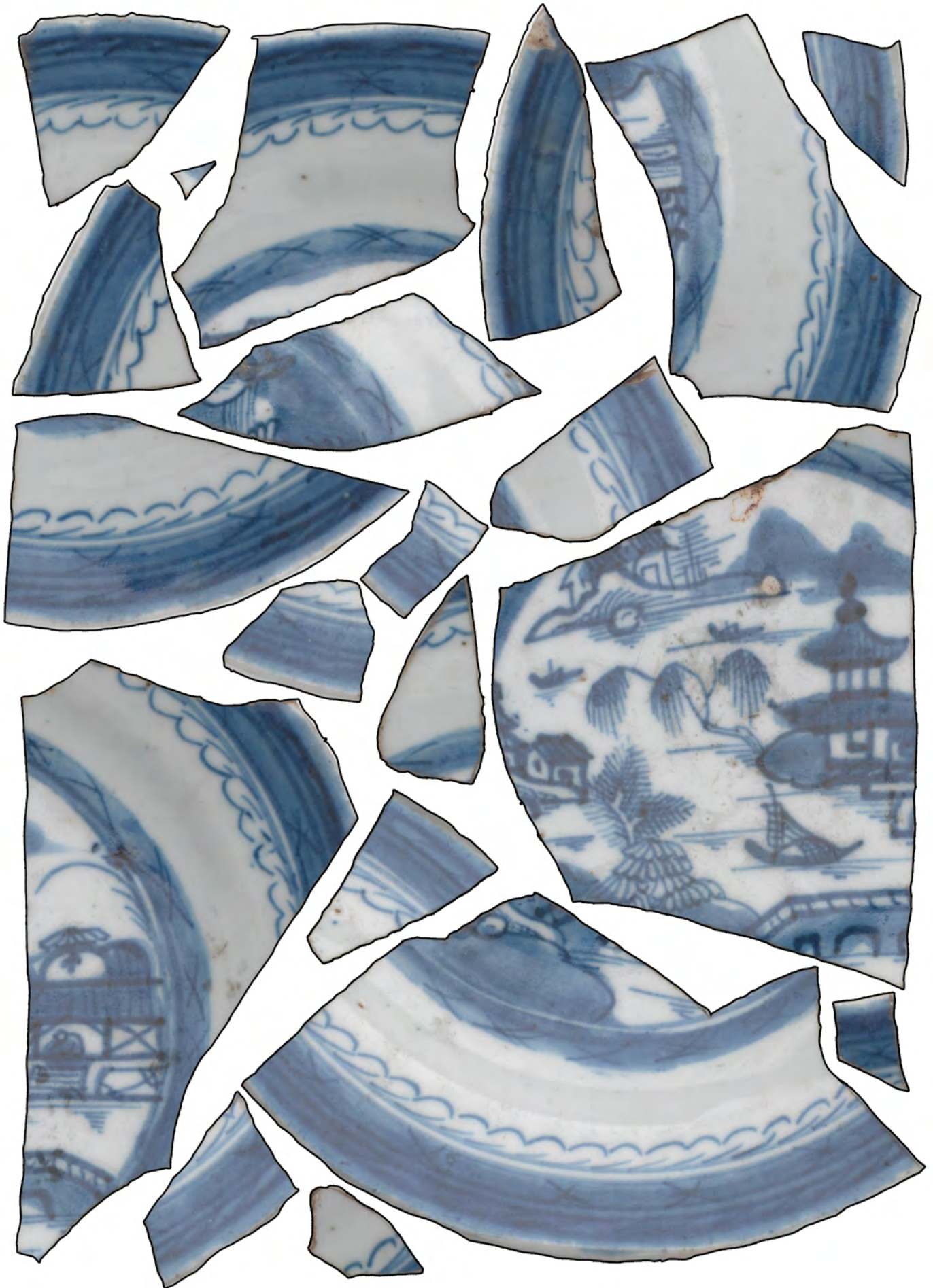
How do you think it may have traveled to the Bronx from where it was made?



Challenge One



Challenge Two



Challenge Three