



DIGITALLY WRITING NEW HISTORIES

How Can Ordinary “Stuff” Make History?



1. How do historians work with historical objects?
2. What can everyday objects tell us about historical events?
3. How do museums tell history?
4. What do your everyday objects say about your life?

"Stuff": Ordinary Objects, Extraordinary Stories

Designed by:	Jeff Koslowski & Heather Sobek
Unit Overview:	In this mini unit, students will be able to learn about the processes that historians use in interpreting history from objects. After exploring some examples of types of sources and artifacts, students will produce a digital museum exhibit displaying objects from their own history that help to tell the stories of their own lives. This unit could be an introductory project to any history class.
Grade Level(s):	6-12
Connection to Primary Source Materials	Students will analyze several primary sources from Michigan history of the Underground Railroad, as well as analyzing "stuff" from their own homes that could become part of the historical record.
Michigan Social Studies Standards Addressed:	<p>Social Studies Process and Skills Standards 6-8:</p> <p>P1.2 Interpret primary and secondary source documents for point of view, context, bias, and frame of reference or perspective.</p> <p>P2.3 Know how to find, organize, and interpret information from a variety of sources.</p> <p>Social Studies Process and Skills Standards: High School</p> <p>P1.2 Interpret primary and secondary source documents for point of view, context, bias, and frame of reference or perspective.</p> <p>P1.3 Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about the interpretation of sources and the application of disciplinary concepts.</p> <p>P1.4 Express social science ideas clearly in written, spoken, and graphic forms.</p> <p>P2.3 Know how to find, organize, evaluate, and interpret information from a variety of credible sources.</p> <p>By the end of grade 8:</p> <p>D2.His.9.6-8. Classify the kinds of historical sources used in a secondary interpretation.</p> <p>D2.His.10.6-8. Detect possible limitations in the historical record based on evidence collected from different kinds of historical sources.</p> <p>D2.His.13.6-8. Evaluate the relevancy and utility of a historical source based on information such as maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.</p>

	<p>By the end of grade 12:</p> <p>D2.His.9.9-12. Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.</p> <p>D2.His.10.9-12. Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.</p>
Disciplinary Literacy Essential Practices:	<p>Inquiry-based instruction</p> <p>Opportunities for and instruction in speaking and listening</p> <p>Community networking to tap into available funds of knowledge in support of developing students' social science knowledge and identities</p>
Other Relevant Standards, Connections to the CCSS, or the Context for the Unit	<p>Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.</p> <p>Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for their intended audiences.</p>
Context For the Unit	<p>This mini unit was developed with the beginning of a course of study in mind. This unit could fit in any history class. It is meant to help students begin to understand how historians and museums use evidence in developing historical arguments. It is also meant to be especially engaging in order to “hook” students at the beginning of a course.</p> <p>This unit also has numerous social-emotional learning benefits, including forming a classroom community and sharing about oneself with the teacher and class. This unit could help a class to develop a strong relationship with one another and their teacher, which then may lead to more productive learning in future activities.</p>

Compelling Question:			
How can ordinary “stuff” make history?			
Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3	Supporting Question 4
How do historians work with historical objects?	What can everyday objects tell us about historical events?	How do museums tell history?	What do your everyday objects say about your life?

Lesson 1: How to be a Historian	
Supporting Question 1:	How do historians work with historical objects?
Step 1	Review primary and secondary sources. Have the students identify several examples of each. This Google Slides review is a starting point (see slide 2).
Step 2	Using examples, identify potential trustworthiness of various sources. Using the identified examples of sources, analyze each type of source & discuss what types of information can be gathered using this artifact. This Google Slides review has definitions and examples (see slides 3 & 4).
Step 3	Introduce students to the idea of Active, Passive, Witnessing, and Representative objects. Have students identify examples of how museums are using the various types? This Google Slides review goes over the four types of objects (see slide 5).
Formative Assessment Task	Given a set of sources (and without using outside information), construct the story of a historical event . Write a brief summary of the event, including an explanation of which sources were used for information.

Lesson 2: Sourcing the Underground Railroad	
Supporting Question 2:	What can everyday objects tell us about historical events?
Step 1	Use this graphic organizer to analyze sources connected to the Underground Railroad in Michigan. Analyze source #1: Image of a church that was a stop on the Underground RR. (Image is linked to a site with more information)
Step 2	Analyze source #2: Newspaper advertisement for a runaway
Step 3	Analyze source #3: Image of a quilt with a coded pattern (Image is linked to a site with more information)
Formative Assessment Task	Exit slip writing assignment : What else do historians need to help tell the story of the Underground Railroad? What sources are missing from this set? Brainstorm a list of possible artifacts that could be used to tell your family history story.

Lesson 3: Visit a Museum	
Supporting Question 3:	How do museums tell history?
Step 1	<p>Have students brainstorm what they know about museums. Possible prompts include:</p> <p>What is the purpose of a museum?</p> <p>What types of artifacts are often included in museums?</p> <p>What types of artifacts are often NOT included in museums?</p>
Step 2	<p>Visit the virtual exhibit “Liberty Tree” from the Museum of the American Revolution with the whole class using the overhead projector. As a class, identify the purpose of the exhibit and describe the artifacts that the museum has chosen to include. Notice the variety that has been included (physical objects, pictures, documents). As you consider each item, discuss as a class why the museum curators might have chosen this object and guide students to also think of artifacts that might not have been chosen.</p>
Step 3	<p>Have students choose one exhibit from any of the following museum virtual tours.</p> <p>Fashioning Yourself from the National Women’s History Museum</p> <p>The Secret Annex from the Anne Frank House</p> <p>Americans and the Holocaust from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum</p> <p>American Revolution from the Museum of the American Revolution</p> <p>As students view the exhibit, fill in the graphic organizer to identify (1) the question being answered or topic, (2) at least three artifacts (objects, images, text, etc.) used to answer the question or tell about the topic, and (3) at least one source that probably exists that was not chosen for the exhibit.</p>
Formative Assessment Task:	Using the mindset of a museum, identify the artifacts from your brainstormed list that most cohesively work together to tell your family history story.

Lesson 4: The Museum of You - An Exhibit Dedicated to An Event in Your Life	
Supporting Question 3:	What do your everyday objects say about your life?
Step 1	Students bring in two or three related objects that help tell the story of themselves (or pictures of objects if not practical to bring in actual artifacts). Briefly share the objects with a partner or small group.
Step 2	Analyze the objects as a historian. What types of sources are they - primary/secondary? How trustworthy are they as sources of historical information? Can any bias be identified? What type of objects would these be labelled as in a museum? Use this graphic organizer to analyze the objects.
Step 3	Write museum placards for each object. Include source information and a brief description of each object.
Formative Assessment Task:	Using a classmate's artifacts and museum placards , write a brief summary of the story they are trying to tell. Then, switch summaries and review for accuracy in order to see how objects might be interpreted by others. Identify any information that may need to be revised for clarity in the final exhibit.

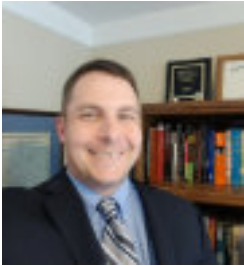
Summative Assessment	
<p>For a summative assessment, students will present their artifacts in a digital museum exhibit. Students may choose how to best represent their museum exhibit. This may take the form of a slideshow, a website, or another form of the student's choice. Physical objects will be represented by photographs in the digital museum. Other students will then be able to view this virtual museum through a class site.</p>	

Rubric		
Areas For Improvement	Criteria Standards for this Assessment	Evidence of Exceeding Standards
Museum exhibit includes minimal sources and/or evidence from the student's history. Objects are either not included or are not photographed.	Sources: Museum exhibit includes 2-3 relevant sources from the student's own history. Physical objects have been photographed in order to be included.	Museum exhibit includes four or more sources from the student's history that connect to a relevant theme. All physical objects have been photographed in detail.
Museum exhibit includes few or no placards for objects. Information on the placards is minimal in content.	Placards: Museum exhibit includes placards for each included object. Placards include a title, year, and a description and/or interpretation of the object.	Museum exhibit includes detailed placards. These would include the title, age, description, how the object was acquired, and interpretation.
Objects lack an inter-relatedness to one another. Objects appear random without much thought to the overall story attempting to be told.	Cohesiveness Sources present the story of a historical event, which is understandable with the information presented	Sources tell a thorough story from beginning to end of a historical event. Viewers of the objects should see in detail what story the student is trying to tell.

About the Inquiry Author



Heather Sobek teaches students in 8th grade at Legg Middle School in Coldwater, Michigan. She has taught history for 11 years. Her favorite aspect of teaching social studies is helping students to experience their learning in as many ways as possible. She can be contacted at sobekhr@ccscards.org.



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Learn More About the Inquiry Here:

