



HISTORICAL OBJECTS LESSON PLAN

Lower Elementary School; Grades 1-3

Related Museum Programs: All; Uses content from the *Meet Victoria* program

BIG IDEA: Objects are a tool to learn about people, places, and events.

DESCRIPTION: During this lesson, students explore how objects can be used to learn about people, places, and events from the past. Students work together to examine objects and try to unravel the stories they represent. Through this process, students begin to understand some of the strategies that historians use to learn about the past.

OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- Understand that objects provide information about people, places, and events.
- Make predictions based on observations.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How do historians learn about the past?
- How can observations help us to make predictions?

TIME FRAME: 1-3 class periods. This activity has been designed to be customized based on your learning goals and your students' individual needs. Choose to do the complete lesson plan or select parts with your students based on your schedule and objectives.

MATERIALS:

- Object Study Worksheet (located in appendix)
- Exploring a Tenement Museum Object Worksheet (located in appendix)
- Objects brought in by students (to be assigned in pre-lesson prep)
- Sample object brought in by teacher

VOCABULARY:

- History
- Detectives
- Artifacts

PROCEDURE:

Pre-Lesson Prep (to be completed before the day of the lesson)

- Assign students to bring in an object that is special or important to them.
- Instruct students to check with their parent or guardian before bringing the item to school.

Part 1: Introduction

- Tell students to discreetly place their objects in a box (or space) by the teacher’s desk at the beginning of the day.
- Explain that in today’s lesson, the students will act as history detectives.
- Ask students what they know about detectives. Collect responses and reinforce that detectives look carefully for clues to help solve mysteries.
- Introduce your object as a “mystery” object and explain that you need the students’ help to figure out who it belongs to and how that person uses it.
- Pass the object to each student. We recommend a circle sitting formation if possible.
- When each student receives the object, s/he should make a comment about the object’s physical appearance. Comments might include observations about the object’s size, shape, color, texture, or design.
- Facilitate a conversation about the object. Possible guiding questions are detailed below. This can also be done as a literacy extension and students can write down their responses.
 - What is familiar about the object? What is unfamiliar or strange about this object?
 - How do you think one could use this object?
 - What kind of person might need to use this object in this way?
 - Where might you find this object?
 - When might the object be used—in the past or present?
- Once students arrive at their own conclusion, reveal that the object belongs to you! Tell the story of the object by explaining what it is as well as how and why you use it.
- Explain to students that the detective work they did is like the work of historians. Reinforce that historians examine objects or artifacts to learn about people, places, and events from the past.

Part 2: Activity

- Explain that in today’s lesson, the students will act as history detectives and will have the opportunity to solve the mysteries of objects—specifically the ones brought in by their classmates.
- Caution students not to reveal the mystery surrounding who the objects belong to.
- Distribute the objects. This activity can be done as individual, partner, or small group work. Depending on which format you feel will work best for your students distribute the objects to one, two, or a few students.
- If Part 1 of the activity was conducted, review the procedure used by the class as they explored the mystery object.

- Record the procedure on the board so that students can easily access it.
 - Comment on how the object looks.
 - Use those observations to discuss how, and why the object was used.
 - Use these clues to guess who the object belongs to.
- Distribute Object Study Worksheet (see: appendix) to guide the students’ detective work.

Part 3: Wrap-Up

- Gather the students back together.
- Have a few volunteers share their objects and work with the class.
- Variation: This can also be done as a literacy extension. Have students write a paragraph telling the story of their object by explaining how and why they think the object was used and by whom.
- Ask students to reveal which object belongs to them.
- Have the students consider the extent that clues were able to guide their detective work. Explain that just like some students might not have been able to accurately solve the mystery, the process of asking questions, making observations, and then using both of these elements to make predictions is the work of historians. Have students consider what other strategies would have helped their detective work. This might include interviewing, researching, etc.

ASSESSMENT:

- Review the Object Study Worksheet.
- Listen in on students’ conversations as they work to uncover the mysteries of their objects. Check to make sure they use observations/clues from the objects to support their thinking.
- Look for evidence of those clues in students’ explanations of who their objects belong to.

EXTENSIONS:

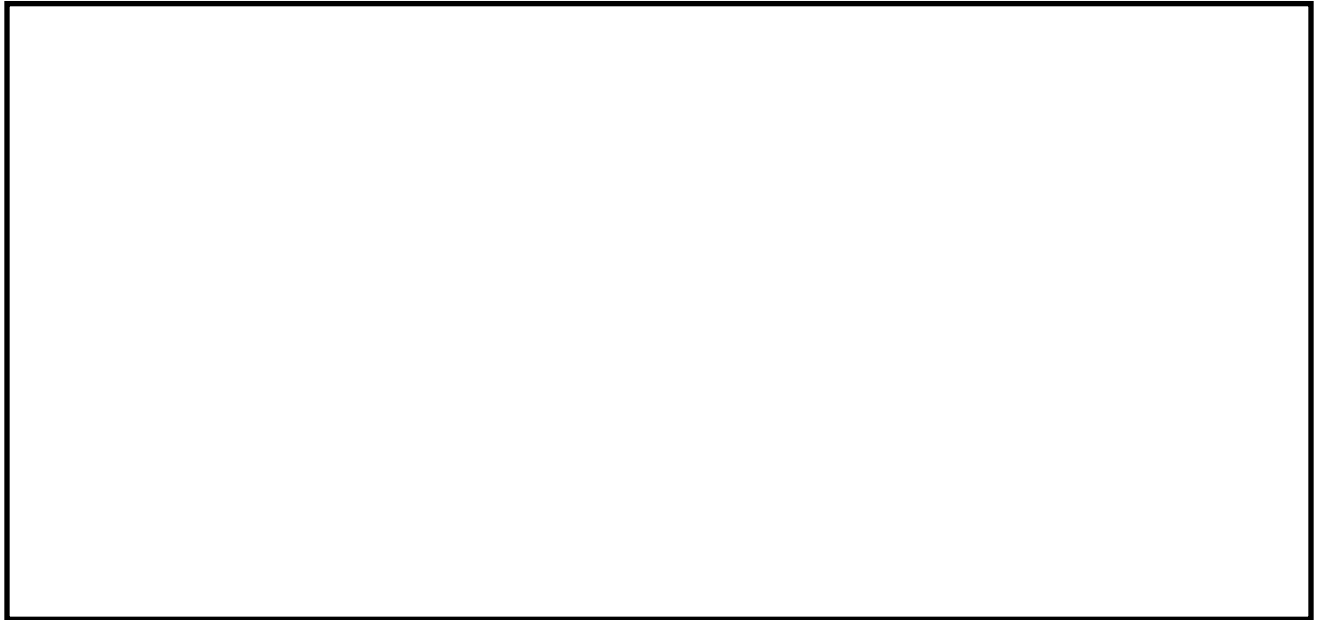
- Just as the students shared objects that were important to them, all people have objects that carry significance. For many immigrants, objects take on special meaning and might be one of the few concrete ways they can remember their past. Have students imagine that they were preparing to move to another country and only had room to pack three objects. What would they be and why?
- Have students explore an object from the Museum’s collection using the Exploring a Tenement Museum Object Worksheet located in the appendix of this lesson. Homemade scooters, like the one pictured, were made from materials found around the area, such as roller skates and scraps of wood. This scooter is modeled on the scooters that former Lower East Side resident Sam Mann used to play with as a child. A single roller skate provides the wheels necessary for mobility.

OBJECT STUDY WORKSHEET

Name: _____

Date: _____

Sketch your object here:



List three words that describe this object:

What is familiar about this object? What is unfamiliar or strange?

How do you think you could use this object? What do you think it does?

EXPLORING A TENEMENT MUSEUM OBJECT WORKSHEET

Name: _____

Date: _____



Sketch the object you see here:

List three words that describe this object:

What is familiar about this object? What is unfamiliar or strange?

How do you think you could use this object? What do you think it does?

Write the object into a story. Include who is using it, where, and in what context.
