



## HISTORICAL OBJECTS LESSON PLAN

Middle School; Grades 6-8

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:** Students explore a collection of objects in order to identify their owner. As they examine and analyze the objects for clues that reveal who the person was, they consider how objects communicate information about all of us.

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will:

- Understand that objects provide information about people, places, and events.
- Experience how researchers use objects to find information about people who lived in the past.
- Learn the importance of compiling research in order to reconstruct history.

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

- How do historians learn about the past?
- How can research help us to understand the past?

**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 Photos (located in appendix)
- Object Guide (located in appendix)
- Photograph of the Confino family's apartment (located in appendix)
- Object Study Worksheet (located in appendix)
- Description of Victoria Confino (located in appendix)

**VOCABULARY:**

- History
- Historian
- Artifacts

## **PROCEDURE:**

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

- Review the Object Guide to become familiar with the material and background of the objects used in this lesson. This information will support the classroom conversation that takes place throughout the lesson.

### Part 1: Introduction

- Explain that in today’s lesson, students will do the work of historians.
- Define the work of historians and explain that historians examine objects or artifacts to learn about people, places, and events from the past.
- Reinforce that when historians conduct research they are often presented with mysterious objects. Historians explore and examine those objects in order to figure out where they came from, when they were used, how they were used, and by whom. By answering those questions, historians can reconstruct parts of history.
- Display the image of the Confino family’s apartment (see: appendix).
- Invite students to make observations about what they notice in the picture.
- Tell students that their challenge will be to examine objects that were found in the space depicted in the image in order to create a profile about the person who used the objects—what were his or her interests? What was his or her life like?
- Lead an object examination of the Victrola and record:
  - Display the image of the Victrola and record.
  - Without identifying what the objects are, tell students that they were found near one another.
  - Collect about ten observations about the physical appearances of the two objects—their color, shape, texture, and design. Challenge students to not repeat observations in order to force them to examine the object closely.
  - Record students’ observations on the board.
- Facilitate a conversation about how the objects were used and what they can inform us about their owner(s) . Remind students to use their observations as a basis for their inferences. Guiding questions might include:
  - What do you think this object is used for?
  - How might it be used?
  - Who might use this object in this way?
  - Record students’ hypotheses on the board next to their observations about the object’s physical appearance.

### Part 2: Activity

- Explain that students will continue to do the work of historians by examining objects or artifacts to learn about people, places, and events from the past. If Part 1 of the activity was conducted, reference the process used by the class as they explored the Victrola and record.
- Display the image of the Confino family’s apartment (see: appendix) and explain that the class will work in groups to explore objects found in this space.

- Review the procedure of examining an object. Remind students to first collect observations about the object and to use those to make inferences regarding its use and owners.
- Select which objects you want the class to explore based on your curricular connections.
- Break students into small groups and distribute one object to each group.
- Distribute the Object Study Worksheet (see: appendix) for students to record their findings.
- Provide time for students to examine their objects.
- Gather students back together and have each group present their findings to the class.
- Facilitate a conversation about who these objects may have belonged to. Some guiding questions might include:
  - Why might this person have owned a Victrola and a record? Why do you listen to music? How can we use that information to understand why the owner of the Victrola listened to music?
  - When might this person have worn the apron? Why?
  - How might this stove have been used? Whose responsibility might the cooking have belonged to? Has anyone ever cooked a meal for their family or even watched someone else cook? What is that experience like? How can we use this information to help us understand the person who used this stove?
  - When might this person have worn the pearl earrings? Often? Once in a while? What kind of person would have worn them all the time? What kind of person would have only worn them once in a while?
  - Why might this person have owned this picture of Kastoria? Do you have any pictures of far-away places in your home? Why do you have those pictures? How can we use that information to determine why this person may have had this picture?
  - How might the Chanukiah have been used? What conclusion can we draw about this person knowing that he or she owned this object?
  - How might this camera have been used? How do we use cameras today? How might this help us guess about the pictures the owner of the camera took?
- Facilitate a conversation about what it was like to use objects to learn about a person who lived in the past. Guiding questions might include:
  - How did these objects help you understand their owner?
  - What was the difference between looking at objects on their own and then looking at them with all of the other objects?
  - What do you think the objects in your home say about you and your family?
- Ask students to write a short story about the owner of the objects and to incorporate the objects into their story. You can also encourage students to do additional research about the objects in order to better craft the story details.

### Part 3: Wrap-Up

- Invite some students to share their writing.
- Share the description of the person who owned the objects, Victoria Confino, with the class (see: appendix).
- Display the Confino family portrait (see: appendix) and tell students that it was also found in the apartment.
- Explain to students that she lived in the building that houses the Tenement Museum.
- Tell students that historians at the museum did similar work to the work they did around the objects, in addition to other research, in order to learn about her.
- Ask students to compare their descriptions of the object's owner with the Museum's description of Victoria. What do some similarities and differences tell us about the complexity of interpreting history?

### **ASSESSMENT:**

- Review the Object Study Worksheet.
- Review the stories written by students.
- Note student participation in small-group and full-class conversations.
- Notice how students use their observations alongside their personal experiences with similar objects to better understand how the objects were used and the person who used them.

### **EXTENSIONS:**

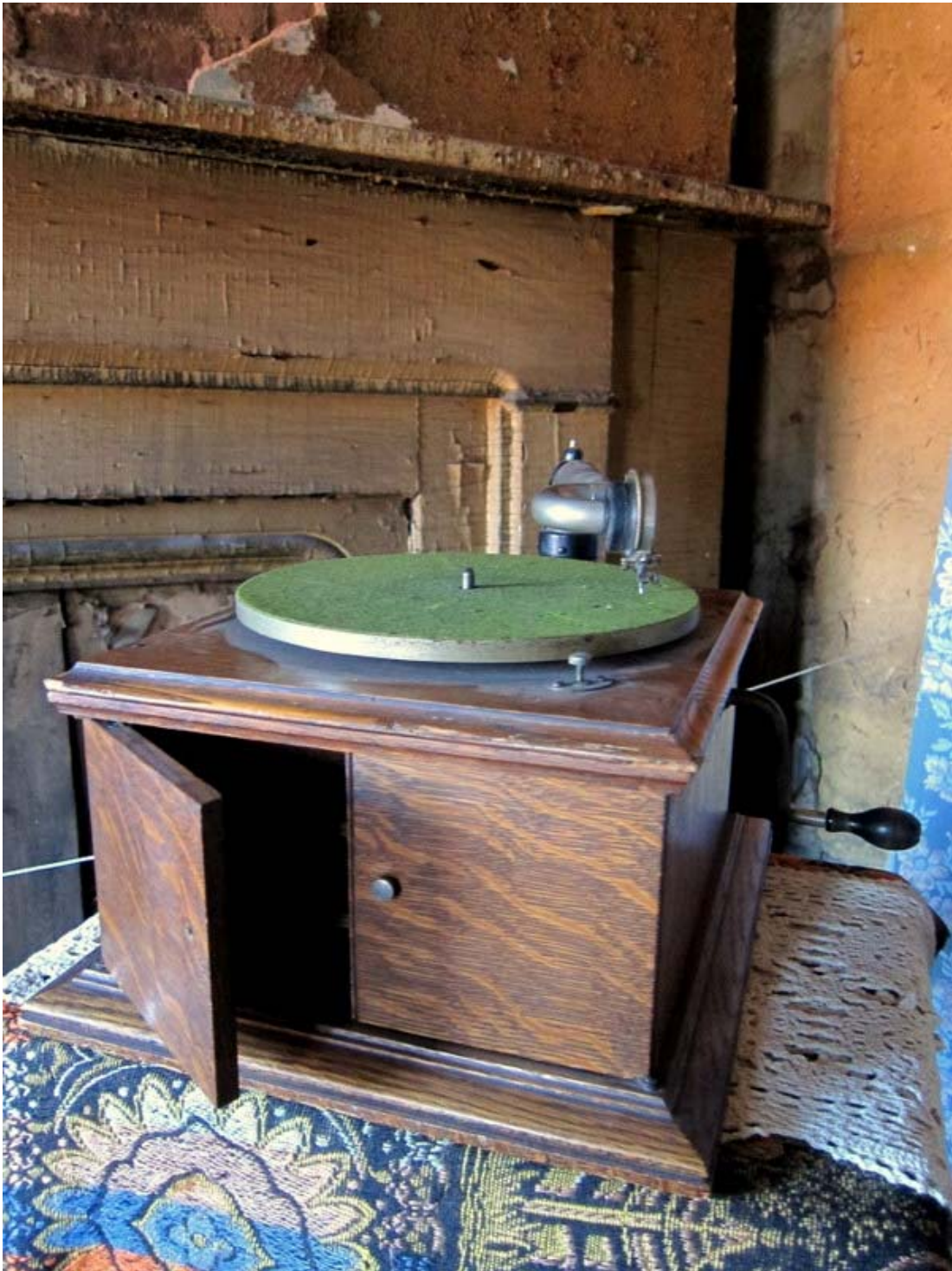
- Have students research a historical figure and determine what objects he or she may have had in his or her home. Tell students to sketch or write a description of the space and the objects in it. Then, have students use the objects to teach one another about their respective historical figures.
- Create a Facebook profile for Victoria Confino using the information you learned about her from the objects.

**APPENDIX: OBJECT PHOTOS**



















**APPENDIX: CONFINO FAMILY APARTMENT**



**APPENDIX: CONFINO FAMILY PORTRAIT**



## APPENDIX: OBJECT GUIDE

**Apron:** Victoria's father opened an apron-making factory. A few years after she started school, her parents took her out of school to "pull threads" at her father's factory. Victoria loved school, so this must have been a disappointment. Victoria would also have worn an apron while doing chores around the house.



**Chanukiah:** This candle holder is used as part of the Jewish celebration of Chanukah. Victoria's family was Jewish and would have used this object each year as they celebrate the holiday. Chanukah lasts eight days and each day is marked by candle-lighting—one candle is lit on the first night, two on the second night, and so on. Students may notice that there are nine spaces for candles. The ninth space is used to hold a "helper candle" that is used to help light the other candles.



**Pearl earrings:** Victoria would have been familiar with pearl earrings as dress wear from her time spent living in Kastoria. She would likely have worn the earring on special occasions only.

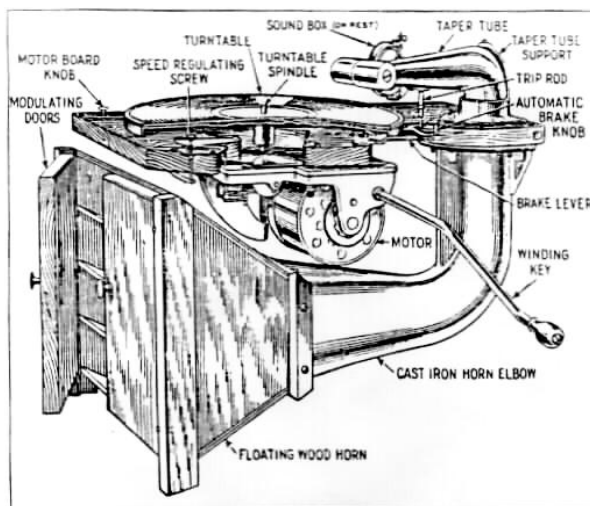


**Record:** The record, (Insert title here), would have been played on the Victrola. This record features a Fox Trot, a popular American dance. Immigrants could take dance classes to learn the Fox Trot at a local settlement house, where they could also receive other social services such as English language classes.



**Victrola:** This home music player was distributed by the Victor Talking Machine Company in the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Parts:



## How to use a victrola:

1. Change the Victrola needle on the Sound Box by unscrewing the small knob that holds it and swapping it out for a new one.



2. Wind the Victrola using the Winding Key.



3. Start the motor by swinging the Break Lever toward the cabinet. This will make the table start turning. Wait a minute or two for the wheel to start spinning up to speed.



4. Once the table is turning up to speed, gently place the Taper Tub onto the record at whatever part in the song you want to begin listening.



5. Raise the volume by opening the Modulating Doors. Closing the doors will lower the volume.





# APPENDIX: OBJECT STUDY WORKSHEET

Name:

Date:

Describe your object. What color is it? What shape is it? What does it seem to be made out of? How is it designed?	How might this object be used? What would it be used for?	Who might use this object?

Does the object remind you of any objects you have used? In what ways is it similar or different?

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Why might this object be important to someone?

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What else do you want to know about this object?

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