

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT – 2009-2012

*Lesson Title – U.S. History Artifact Autobiographies
From Karen Cook*

Grade - 11

Length of class period – 45 minutes

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

How and what can we learn about an historical era from its material culture? What do artifacts reveal about the culture, values, politics, everyday life and technology of an era?

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

- Students will find an appropriate artifact to answer the essential question.
- Students will analyze the significance of the artifact and examine its place in broader themes.
- Students will write a piece of historical fiction from the perspective of their artifact.

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) – (please attach)

There are several ways to collect materials for this project. This may be connected with a museum visit, or if studying modern history the items can be brought from home. Successful projects included items displayed in the Slater Museum and 1970s items brought from home.

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

Begin with a previously selected item and have students examine the artifact closely. Have them tell you everything they can about the artifact. Then ask them to consider:

How do you think this item was made? with what materials?

How do you think this artifact was used? by whom?

How did the artifact get here?

Why was this artifact valued in its time?

Why is it valued now?

What is the story of this artifact?

In answering the last question it is fun to have one person start the story and then pass it to another student until everyone has contributed. Discuss which parts of the story could be true and which could not in order to establish historical context.

After this introduction have students select their own items for the subject of their autobiographies. If students are in a museum, ask them to sketch or photograph the artifact and note all provided text. Share the rubric attached for the finished autobiography. You may need an additional lesson on how to conduct research for historical fiction writing.

Conclude the lesson with a time to share the autobiographies. This can be especially fun if you can return to the museum or have the artifact displayed during the presentation.

Connecticut Grade Level Expectations- Grades 9-12

- 1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of significant events and themes in United States History.
- 2.1 Access and gather information from a variety of primary and secondary sources.
- 2.2 Interpret information from a variety of primary and secondary sources.
- 2.3 Create various forms of written work.
- 2.4 Demonstrate an ability to participate in social studies discourse through informed discussion, debate and effective oral presentation.

Artifact Autobiography Rubric

	Depth of Research	Fictional Elements	Conceptual Understanding	Writing Mechanics
A	Your works consulted page contains a minimum of 5 high quality sources. You investigated how the artifact was produced and the history of the era.	You included creative elements that enhance our understanding of the history of the era. You engage the reader in your story.	Your autobiography offers numerous connections to the essential questions and themes of this unit.	You write clearly and fluently with meticulous attention to spelling and grammar.
B	Your works consulted page contains a minimum of 4 sources. You investigated how the artifact was produced and the history of the era.	You included creative elements that do not conflict with the history of the era.	Your autobiography offers connections to the essential questions and themes of this unit.	You write clearly and fluently with careful attention to spelling and grammar.
C	Your works consulted page contains a minimum of 3 sources. You investigated how the artifact was produced and the history of the era.	You included creative elements that may conflict with the history of the era.	Your autobiography offers connections to the essential questions or themes of this unit.	You write clearly enough for the reader to follow your story. You may have spelling and grammar errors that interfere with your fluency.
D	Your works consulted page contains a minimum of 2 sources. You investigated how the artifact was produced and the history of the era.	You included creative elements that may conflict with the history of the era and may confuse the reader.	Your autobiography offers connections to the essential questions or themes of this unit that may be inaccurate or improbable.	You write clearly enough for the reader to follow your story, but may get sidetracked at times. You have spelling and grammar errors that interfere with fluency.
	Your works consulted page was not submitted, or your autobiography plagiarizes the work of others.	You do not include creative elements, or do not base the creative elements on accurate facts.	Your autobiography offers no connections to the essential questions or themes of this	Your paper has numerous spelling and grammatical errors and appears to be a rough draft.

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