

# What Do Historical Objects Tell Me?

## Guiding Question for Students

*How can I detect what historical objects and pictures tell me?*



## Overview

In *What Do Historical Objects Tell Me?*, students will learn how to analyze objects and pictures to gather important information about their features, provenance, authenticity, and reliability.

## Objectives

Through completion of this lesson, students will:

- learn how to “read” the information provided by objects
- practice their observation skills through engaging with historical and modern objects
- demonstrate their ability to analyze objects by making inferences about the time periods in which the objects were created, the people who owned them, their uses, etc.

## Important Teacher Terms

- Form and Format
- Provenance
- Authentic
- Reliability
- Forgery

**Note: This lesson plan was originally created for grades K-3 and includes the appropriate TEKS. It can, however, be modified for other grades.**

# Lesson Plan Steps:

1. Arrange the room in a manner that allows all students to see the projector and encourages discussion
2. Write the Guiding Question across the top of the board
3. Review the Visual Thinking Strategies and Archival Terms Handouts
4. Load “Object Analysis” PowerPoint on a computer with a projector attached; print notes pages and Slide Questions
5. Complete the “Practice: Finding Clues” Activity
6. Complete one of the “Thinking Like a Detective” Activities
7. Have students complete a grade-level appropriate “Detecting History” Activity
8. Have students complete the Exit Ticket and share their answers with the class

## For Your Information

For additional information about object analysis and how to include it in existing curriculum, please reference the following Web sites:

- <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/>
- <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>
- <http://www.archives.gov/nae/education/pdf/integrating-primary-sources-into-the-classroom.pdf>
- <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/index.html>
- <http://www.archives.gov/nae/education/pdf/guidelines-for-using-primary-sources.pdf>

# Practice: Finding Clues

Prepare for this activity by selecting artifacts and photographs from your home, the school, and the National Archives online public access site.

1. Give each student a double-sided copy of “Finding Clues in Pictures” and “Finding Clues on Artifacts” (the Finding Clues Handout)
2. Work through an analysis of two or three pictures and objects with students so they can practice the skills they have learned; if the students will be handling the object, consider having them wear gloves
3. Presentation of the objects could take any of the following forms: passing the object around the classroom, projection with document camera, setting up centers, placing objects at the front of the classroom and allowing students to walk by and take observation notes, etc.
4. Once students have had a chance to analyze the objects, discuss their findings making sure to clarify any questions they may have about the process



## Photographic Citations for Red, White, and Blue Christmas

Listed L-R by row. All photographs were taken by White House photographer Joyce N. Boghosian and are provided courtesy of the George W. Bush Presidential Library.

1. Florida Congressman Allen Boyd selected artist Paul Brent to decorate the 2nd District's ornament for the 2008 White House Christmas Tree. Image: F110508JB-0307
2. New York Congressman Tim Bishop selected artist Glen Pagano to decorate the 1st District's ornament for the 2008 White House Christmas Tree. Image: F110508JB-0416
3. South Dakota Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth Sandlin selected artist Carol Weber Green to decorate the At Large District's ornament for the 2008 White House Christmas Tree. Image: F110508JB-0762
4. Oklahoma Congresswoman Mary Fallin selected artist Njeri Rose Haygood to decorate the 5th District's ornament for the 2008 White House Christmas Tree. Image: F110508JB-0022
5. Illinois Senator Barack Obama selected artist Joseph L. Marshall to decorate the State's ornament for the 2008 White House Christmas Tree . Image: F110508JB-0045
6. Alabama Congressman Spencer Bachus selected artist Alexandria Todd to decorate the 6th District's ornament for the 2008 White House Christmas Tree. Image: F110508JB-0264

For additional information, see <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/holiday/2008/>

# Detecting History Activities:

## Suggested Answers

NOTE: The following are suggested answers for the “Detecting History” Activities on the following pages. Students may have acceptable answers that differ from the suggested answers.

### **Page 5—Detecting History: What Do You See? “Red, White and Blue Christmas”**

Bald eagle; United States flag; Statue of Liberty; red, white and blue; Mount Rushmore; Abraham Lincoln; George Washington; Thomas Jefferson; Theodore Roosevelt; the White House; Native Americans

### **Page 6—Detecting History: What Can You Learn? “Sheryl Byland’s Letter”**

Sheryl Byland wrote the letter, she is 8 years old.

There were 49 states when she drew the flag. This means the United States was not always 50 states.

Her flag is red, white and blue; it has the letters USA in it.

The President might have requested letters be sent to him with flag design suggestions.

The letter was possibly received on October 30, 1958.

### **Page 7— Detecting History: What Do You Know? “Fourth of July”**

The Fourth of July is the celebration of American Independence.

Celebrations could include: fireworks, parades, picnics, carnivals, concerts, and possibly dressing up in patriotic costume – Uncle Sam, George Washington, etc.

### **Page 8— Detecting History: What Do You See? “Washington at Valley Forge”**

The soldiers were injured, hungry, and were wearing ragged uniforms; some were even missing shoes.

The winter was brutally cold and the wind was harsh.

There was not sufficient shelter for all the soldiers.

Soldiers still were required to train with their weapons and do guard duty.

There were very few horses for the men.

### **Page 9— Detecting History: What Can you Learn? “WASPs”**

The women served in the Airforce when male pilots were deployed during World War II.

WASPs often moved large aircraft and supplies to locations where soldiers needed them to be.

Their jobs could be dangerous as they were required to fly near or into combat zones.

Although the work of the women was not recognized until much later, they were willing to make sacrifices for their country during a time of need.



## Detecting History: What Do You See?

President and Mrs. Bush had a “A Red, White and Blue Christmas” at the White House in 2008. Each state sent patriotic ornaments to hang on the tree. Look at the ornaments below to find as many patriotic symbols, buildings, or people as you can. Make a list below the pictures.



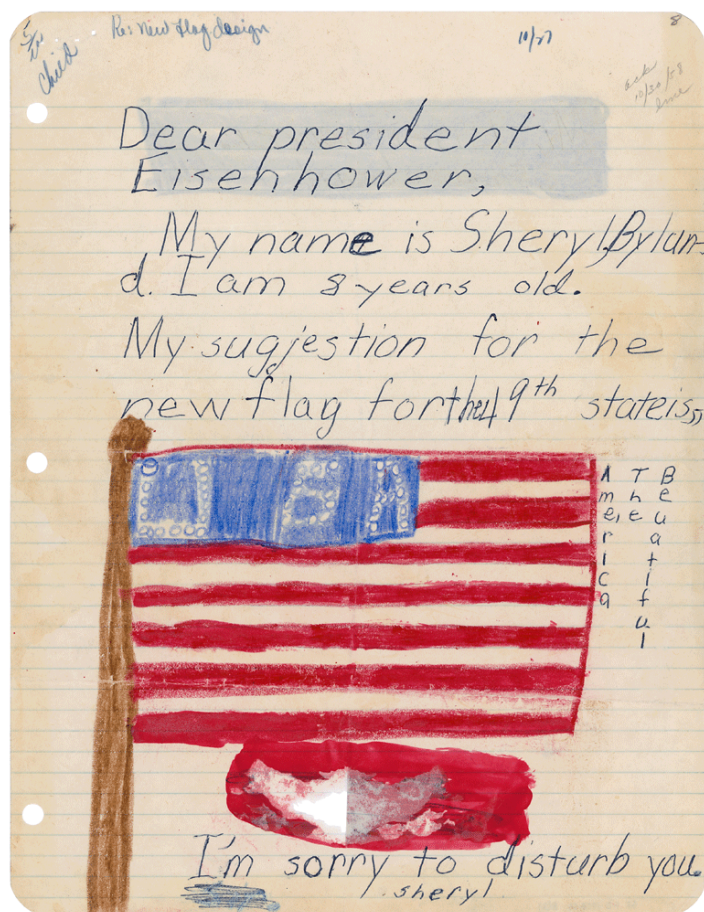
All photographs depict ornaments from the “Red, White, and Blue Christmas,” 2008. Courtesy of the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum. (Titles of photographs are on page 3.)



## Detecting History: What Can You Learn?

Sometimes historians use letters written by kids to learn about history! This letter was sent to President Dwight D. Eisenhower by eight-year-old Sheryl Byland.

What do you think a historian could learn from Sheryl's letter?



1.

2.

National Archives and Records Administration. Letter from Sheryl Byland to President Dwight D. Eisenhower Regarding American Flag Design Suggestion, 10/1958. ARC Identifier: 594335.



# Detecting History: What Do You Know?

Historians use primary sources to learn about history. The pictures below were taken on Independence Day. Use the pictures and what you know about the Fourth of July to describe why the holiday is important to Americans and how we celebrate it.



National Archives and Records Administration. Photograph of fireworks going off in the night sky by the Washington Monument, during ceremonies celebrating the 175th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence., 07/04/1951, ARC Identifier: 200339



Library of Congress. Bicycle riders in parade on the Fourth of July at Vale, Oregon. Lee, Russell, 1903-1986, photographer. 1941 July. Call Number: LC-USF33- 013082-M4



Library of Congress. Bridgeton, New Jersey. Fourth of July picnic. Collier, John, 1913-1992, photographer. 1942 July. Call Number: LC-USF34- 083293-C



Library of Congress. Carnival feature at the Fourth of July celebration at Vale, Oregon. Lee, Russell, 1903-1986, photographer. 1941 July. Call Number: LC-USF34- 039622-D



## Detecting History: What Do You See?

To learn about the past, historians use artwork as well as what people write. The picture below was made in the 1930s. It shows George Washington talking to Lafayette at Valley Forge in 1777. This was during the Revolutionary War when the American colonies fought for their independence from Great Britain. Using what you see in the picture, write three sentences describing what it was like living in Valley Forge that winter.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

National Archives and Records Administration. Valley Forge-Washington & Lafayette. Winter 1777-78. Copy of engraving by H. B. Hall after Alonzo Chappel., 1931 - 1932. ARC Identifier: 532877





## Detecting History: What Can You Learn?

Using the photographs and the National Archives Web site below, write a paragraph describing how the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) were good citizens who served the United States during a time of need.



**Caption:**

Four members of the United States WASPs receive final instructions as they chart a cross-country course on the flight line of U.S. airport, 1942 - 1945, ARC Identifier: 535781

**Caption:**

Harlingen Army Air Field, Texas-Elizabeth L. Gardner of Rockford, Illinois, WASP pilot, takes a look around before sending her plane streaking down the runway at the air base., ca. 1930 - 1975, ARC Identifier: 542191



**National Archives "A People at War" Web site:**

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/a\\_people\\_at\\_war/women\\_who\\_served/wafs\\_wasp.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/a_people_at_war/women_who_served/wafs_wasp.html)

# Exit Ticket

## Directions:

1. Instruct students to take out a sheet of notebook paper and a writing utensil.
2. Write one of the following prompts on the board.
  - List three things you learned today about how historians use objects to detect history.
  - How do historians use objects to learn about history?
  - What can you learn from a photograph?
  - What can you learn from an artifact?
  - What could a historian tell about you from the objects you have with you today?
3. Have students complete their Exit Ticket; once they have finished ask for volunteers to share their answers with the class.



# TEKS Standards

## Kindergarten

- (3) History. The student understands the concept of chronology. The student is expected to:
  - (B) use vocabulary related to time and chronology, including before, after, next, first, last, yesterday, today, and tomorrow.
- (14) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:
  - (B) obtain information about a topic using a variety of valid visual sources such as pictures, symbols, electronic media, print material, and artifacts; and
- (16) Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:
  - (A) use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution;

## First

- (3) History. The student understands the concepts of time and chronology. The student is expected to:
  - (A) distinguish among past, present, and future;
- (17) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:
  - (B) obtain information about a topic using a variety of valid visual sources such as pictures, symbols, electronic media, maps, literature, and artifacts; and
- (19) Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:
  - (A) use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution;

# TEKS Standards

## Second

- (2) History. The student understands the concepts of time and chronology. The student is expected to:
  - (B) apply vocabulary related to chronology, including past, present, and future; and
- (3) History. The student understands how various sources provide information about the past and present. The student is expected to:
  - (B) describe various evidence of the same time period using primary sources such as photographs, journals, and interviews.
- (18) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:
  - (B) obtain information about a topic using a variety of valid visual sources such as pictures, maps, electronic sources, literature, reference sources, and artifacts;
  - (E) interpret oral, visual, and print material by identifying the main idea, predicting, and comparing and contrasting.
- (20) Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:
  - (A) use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution;

## Third

- (3) History. The student understands the concepts of time and chronology. The student is expected to:
  - (A) use vocabulary related to chronology, including past, present, and future times;
- (17) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:
  - (A) research information, including historical and current events, and geographic data, about the community and world, using a variety of valid print, oral, visual, and Internet resources;
  - (C) interpret oral, visual, and print material by identifying the main idea, distinguishing between fact and opinion, identifying cause and effect, and comparing and contrasting;
- (19) Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:
  - (A) use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution;