

# 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

### A Note on the Grade Level:

This lesson can be modified to address the TEKS for grades 6-12. Relevant TEKS have been included at the end of the lesson plan.

# Lesson Plan Steps:

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

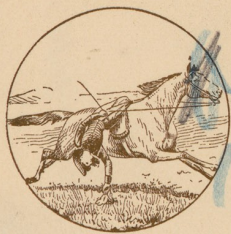
Prepare for this activity by selecting artifacts and photographs from your home, the school, a local antique store, and/or the National Archives online public access site.

1. Give each student a double-sided copy of “Finding Clues in Pictures” and “Finding Clues on Artifacts” (on the FindingClues\_Handout)
2. To start their analysis, have students treat the Annie Oakley letter on page 4 as both a document and an object; ask them what they can learn from the text and from the images and markings on the letter.
3. Ask students to detect what historical event prompted Annie Oakley to send this letter and if they think President McKinley accepted her offer.
4. Next, 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 objects, you may want to consider having them wear gloves.
5. 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.
6. 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.





A SUCCESS IN ALL COUNTRIES.

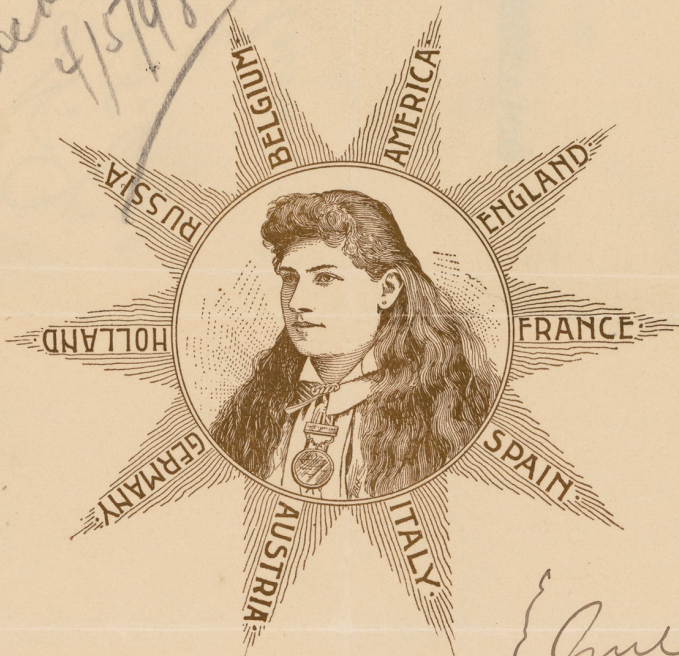


# ANNIE OAKLEY

America's Representative Lady Shot.

*recd  
4/5/98*

For eleven years next to  
**BUFFALO BILL**  
the attraction with the  
Wild West.  
The wonder and talk of  
the American Exhibitions  
London '87,  
Paris Exhibition, '89,  
Horticultural Exhibition  
London '92,  
World's Fair, Chicago, '93



Miss Oakley,  
has appeared before all  
the Royalty and Nobility  
of Europe, including  
their R. H. the  
Prince and Princess  
of Wales  
before whom she has  
given fine exhibitions.

*{ Quoted p. 2 of 5th*

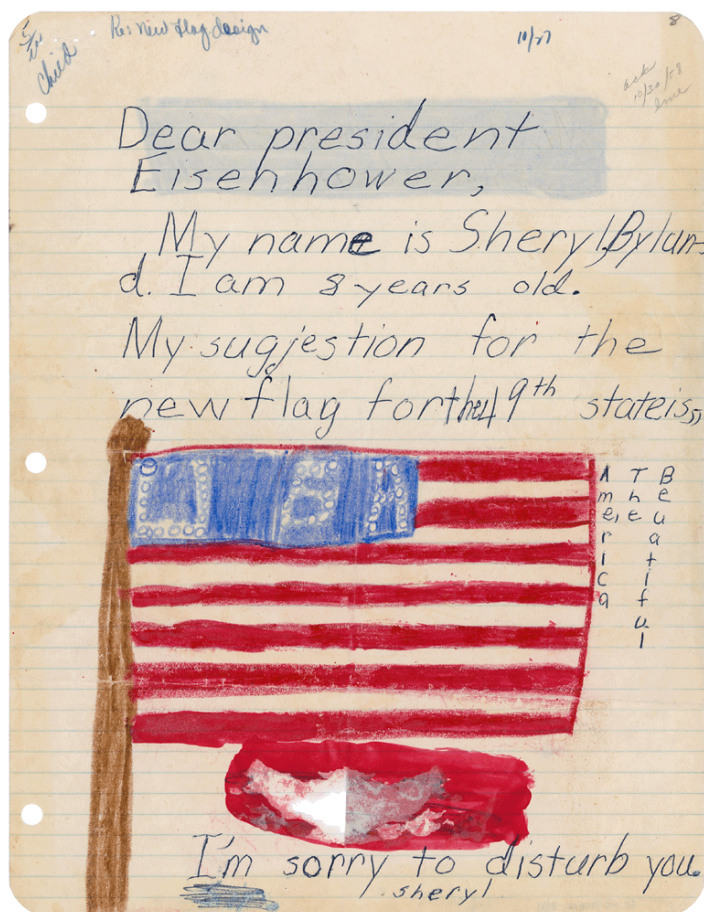
To our Hon McKinley President  
As Sir I for one feel confident  
that your good judgment will carry America  
safely through without war  
but in case of such an event I am ready  
to place a company of fifty Lady sharpshooters  
at your disposal. Every one of them will  
be an American and as they will furnish  
their own arms and ammunition will  
be little if any expense to the government.  
Very truly  
Annie Oakley





## Detecting History: What Can You Learn?

Historians often use letters and diaries to learn about history; sometimes the records they find were written by children. This letter was sent to President Dwight D. Eisenhower by eight-year-old Sheryl Byland. Using the text in Sheryl's letter and your knowledge of history, write three facts that a historian could learn or support by reading this letter.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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



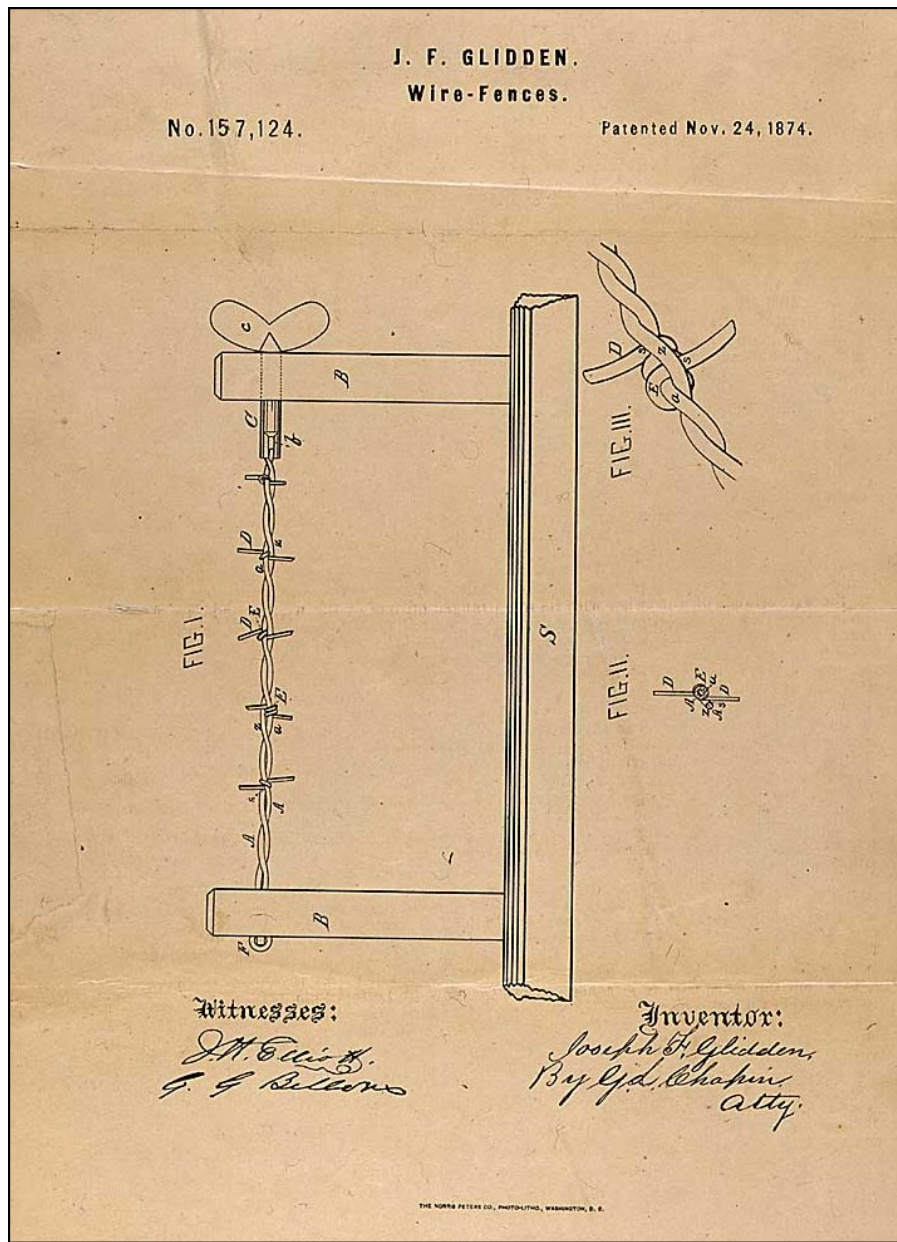
Library of Congress. Carnival feature at the Fourth of July celebration at Vale, Oregon. Lee, Russell, 1903-1986, photographer. 1941 July. Call Number: LC-USF34- 039622-D





# Detecting History: What Can You Learn?

To learn about scientific inventions in the past, historians often reference patent applications. The image below is a copy of the “Patent Drawing for Joseph F. Glidden's Improvement to Barbed Wire, 11/24/1874.” Using what you see in the drawing, as well as your knowledge of Texas history, analyze both the purpose and the significance of Glidden’s invention to the ranching and cattle industries in Texas.



National Archives and Records Administration. Patent Drawing for Joseph F. Glidden's Improvement to Barbed Wire, 11/24/1874. ARC Identifier: 302051.



## Detecting History: What Do You See?

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



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 paper analyzing the significance of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) during World War II. Your analysis should include both their impact and an evaluation of what happened to their units after the war.



**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? The photographs you post on your Facebook page?
3. Have students complete their Exit Ticket; once they have finished ask for volunteers to share their answers with the class.





# TEKS Standards

## Sixth

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

- (A) differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software; interviews; biographies; oral, print, and visual material; and artifacts to acquire information about various world cultures;
- (B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;
- (C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps;
- (D) identify different points of view about an issue or current topic;

(23) 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;

## Seventh

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

- (A) differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software; interviews; biographies; oral, print, and visual material; and artifacts to acquire information about various world cultures;
- (B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;
- (C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps;
- (D) identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants;
- (E) support a point of view on a social studies issue or event;
- (F) identify bias in written, oral, and visual material;
- (G) evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author;

(23) 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

## **Eighth**

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

- (A) differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas;
- (B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;
- (C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps;
- (D) identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference which influenced the participants;
- (E) support a point of view on a social studies issue or event;
- (F) identify bias in written, oral, and visual material;
- (G) evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author;

(23) 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

## **US History**

(29) 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) use a variety of both primary and secondary valid sources to acquire information and to analyze and answer historical questions;
- (B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing and contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations, making predictions, drawing inferences, and drawing conclusions;
- (D) use the process of historical inquiry to research, interpret, and use multiple types of sources of evidence;
- (E) evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author, including points of view, frames of reference, and historical context;
- (F) identify bias in written, oral, and visual material;
- (G) identify and support with historical evidence a point of view on a social studies issue or event;

(32) 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

## World History

(29) 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) explain how historians, when examining sources, analyze frame of reference, historical context, and point of view to interpret historical events;
- (C) explain the differences between primary and secondary sources and examine those sources to analyze frame of reference, historical context, and point of view;
- (D) evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author;
- (E) identify bias in written, oral, and visual material;
- (F) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, drawing inferences and conclusions, and developing connections between historical events over time

(32) 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

## World Geography

(21) 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) analyze and evaluate the validity and utility of multiple sources of geographic information such as primary and secondary sources, aerial photographs, and maps;

## U.S. Government

(20) 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) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;

(D) analyze and evaluate the validity of information, arguments, and counterarguments from primary and secondary sources for bias, propaganda, point of view, and frame of reference;

(E) evaluate government data using charts, tables, graphs, and maps

(22) 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;