How do everyday objects/artifacts help to tell the story of your family?

Family Story Gallery

Background Information

Historians use primary sources from people whose lives were different in order to gain context on social, historical, and cultural experiences of diverse populations. This activity is designed to build classroom community through object storytelling.

Lesson Description

Students will collaborate with family members to identify a family heirloom that helps to tell the history of their family. Then, using photos of the object and gallery labels explaining the story of the object, a classroom museum is created.

Grade Range: **K-12**

Time to complete lesson: **2-3 lessons**

Resources needed:

- Family interview questions
- Examples of family letters
- Photos and artifacts (teacher)
- Creating a wall label handout

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By the end of this lesson, students will **know**:

- How historians glean information from primary sources.
- How to make interpretations based on artifacts.

By the end of this lesson, students will **be able to**:

- Select, identify, label, and explain a family heirloom that tells a story about their family history.
- Reflect on what information classmates gleaned from their artifact.

Supported Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Lesson Plan

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. Ask students if they've ever seen objects in their home or photos of people that look like them in a museum.

2. Show students a few photos from the You Chung Hong Family Collection and The Huntington Digital Library Prints and Ephemera Collections. Select any photos from the collections (Materials #1-2). Check in with students during image viewing to share if they had experienced or seen similar content in their lives.

3. Explain that these images are part of The Huntington collections and are used to learn about society by historians. Review vocabulary.

Activity #1: Family Interview (30 minutes done independently as out of class assignment)

4. The dual purposes of the interview are to have students practice listening and speaking skills as well as to help guide students and families in jointly identifying an object of family historical value for a classroom gallery exhibit.

5. Students will choose at least one family member (preferably from an older generation, such as parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles) to ask five or more questions from the assignment sheet (Material #3).

6. Students will need access to their photographs in class. Provide instruction to them about how they should share their photos (emailed to you, uploaded to a classroom site, etc.)

Differentiation: Have students practice asking questions to each other and plan their own interview strategy.

Extension: Students may write a summary of interview responses to accompany their artifact.

Activity #2: Photo Selection and Gallery Label (15-20 minutes)

1. Students will analyze teacher provided gallery labels (Material #4). They will then draft the gallery label for their selected artifact.

2. After teacher and peer feedback is given, students will revise their wall label.

3. Optional: students can create an electronic document which contains their artifact and its label for classroom gallery.

Activity #3: Gallery Walk (30-45 minutes after set-up)

1. Set up the gallery with either printed documents or digital displays

2. Post Possible Feedback Starters (Material #5) at each station.

3. Students visit each artifact in partners or groups and leave feedback for peers using sticky notes around the display site. When a full rotation has occurred, allow time for students to read feedback left by peers. Feedback can be saved in student notebooks or portfolios by simply placing sticky notes near artifact displays as a reminder of past successes.

Alternative Execution: Hire a team of "curators" to organize the gallery walk. They will be responsible for planning and executing the design of the gallery space in a way that invites engagement and stimulates curiosity. They also report on their process and explain curation to the teacher and class. Rotate this "team" throughout the school year to include all students.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

1. Invite students to share their personal experiences with interviewing a family member and creating a museum label for that object. This can be done in pairs, groups, or as a whole class discussion.

Vocabulary List

Word	Meaning	Variations to Use (and Encourage Students to	Notes
ephemera	Things that exist for and are only used for a short period of time.	ephemeral	
artifact	An object made by a human being, typically an item of cultural or historical interest.		
heirloom	A valuable object that has belonged to a family for several generations.	inheritance	
sentimental	Of or prompted by feelings of tenderness, sadness, or nostalgia.	Sentiment, sentimentality	
primary source	An artifact, document, diary, manuscript, autobiography, recording, or any other source of information that was created during the time being studied		

Materials

Material #1- You Chung Hong Collection: https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p16003coll12/search

Material #2- Jay T. Last Collection of Graphic Arts and Social History: https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p16003coll4

Material #3- Family interview questions

Instructions:

Part One: Interview- choose at least one family member (preferably from an older generation, such as parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles) to ask five or more interview questions. Audio record and/or transcribe your interviewee's answers.

1. What was the house (apartment, farm, etc.) that you lived in as a child like? How many rooms did it have? Bathrooms? Did it have electricity? Indoor plumbing? Telephones?
2. Were there any special items in the house that you remember?
3. What kind of games did you play growing up?
4. What was your favorite toy and why?
5. How is the world today different from what it was like when you were a child?
6. Have any recipes been passed down to you from family members?
7. Have any pictures been passed down to you from family members?
8. Of the things you learned from your parents, what do you feel was the most valuable?
9. What accomplishments are you most proud of?
10. What is the one thing you most want people to remember about you?

Part Two: Object Selection- In collaboration with your interviewee, select an object that illustrates an important aspect of your family history. This might be a book, a piece of jewelry, a photograph, a tool, a recipe, a piece of clothing, or something else. Take several photos of the object from various angles. Share the photos with your teacher before class.

Material #4- Object Labels

Name of Work (in italics)	*La Grand Rue du Petit Fouches*
Artist or Maker's name	Unknown, Belgium, 1960's
Materials Used	Film print, decorated wood frame
Unique Accession Number	001
Identify object	Sepia photo in frame

Name of Work (in italics)	*Kinfolk with Accordian*
Artist or Maker's name	Unknown, Belgium, 1940's
Materials Used	Film print, wood plank frame
Unique Accession Number	002
Identify object	Sepia photo in frame

Material #5- Possible feedback starters

1. "I enjoyed learning _____ about your family because_____."
2. "Something I did not know before is _____.
3. "I like the way you _____ because_____."