

Wisconsin 101: Our History in Objects Lesson Plan

Next Steps in Object History: Making Connections to Places and the Past

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What is the purpose of this lesson? To get students to think of an object as a focal point for historical narratives, asking questions about history, using sources to answer them, and writing about what they found.

What will students produce? One object history and two related stories, see [Wisconsin 101](#) for examples

Wisconsin Social Studies Learning Priorities:

- Inq1.a: Develop questions based on a topic
- Inq1.b: Plan an inquiry
- Inq2.a: Gather diverse sources (electronic, digital, print, and other mass media) applicable to the inquiry
- Inq2.b: Evaluate sources
- Inq4.a: Communicate conclusions
- Hist2.b: Patterns change over a period of time
- Hist2.c: Contextualization
- Hist3.c: Current implications
- Hist4.a: Historical context
- Hist4.b: Intended audience
- Hist4.c: Purpose
- Hist4.d: Point of view (POV)

This object history lesson plan is for more advanced students, group projects, National History Day, or other more involved lessons. Students will prepare three histories: an object description and two related histories. If you choose, this project can culminate in submitting to Wisconsin 101.

Choosing an object

For such a big project, it's useful to have a theme to guide students' object selection. This theme can help guide students' inquiry into the object, and help meet learning goals. Regardless of the theme, the best projects come when students have a personal interest in or connection to their chosen object. Possible themes include:

- Migration (Geog2.b)
- Wisconsin history
- Technological change (BH4.a)
- Self-image/identity (BH1.b)
- Local sites of historical interest
- National History Day theme

Inquiry

Students can begin by describing their objects.

Have students brainstorm a list of closed- and open-ended questions to guide inquiry into the objects.

Have students gather and review a variety of sources to help answer their questions.

Writing Your Stories

Students can begin by writing a 400-500 word object history. This history should do the following:

- Describe the object (what it is, how it works, what it does)
- Say how old the object is
- What places can you connect this object to?
 - If you intend to have students submit to Wisconsin 101, make sure objects are clearly grounded in a location in Wisconsin.
- Most of the essay should focus on answering at least one of the following questions (Inq4.a):
 - Why is this object important to you?
 - What would you want other students to know about this object?
 - How does this object show continuity or change in your community over time? (Hist2.a; Hist2.b)
 - What does this object say about trends in Wisconsin history? (Hist2.c, more advanced students can provide historical context from the time the object was made or used)
 - How does this object from the past connect to your life now? (Hist3.c)
 - How did this piece of technology affect daily life? (BH4.a)

Then students will write two 600-750 word stories related to their chosen object, each citing at least three primary or secondary sources. These stories could develop points in the object history or explore other connected questions. Possible prompts include:

- Who were the key players, people or organizations? How did they relate to one another? When were they alive / active?
- What problems did your subjects (person, organization, object, etc.) solve? How did they solve them? What were their purposes? Why were they important? How did they contribute to further development?
- How does this story relate to Wisconsin? What communities were involved and what was the impact? Where do we see traces of the subject today?
- What technologies were involved? How did they work? How did they change over time? How did they impact their communities?
- What is the historical significance of the history? How does it relate to other historical stories and other places?
- Address what concept or lesson students in Wisconsin should take away from their encounter with this object. (e.g. what does this object teach us about (pick one) technology, culture, innovation, immigration, exploration, industry, etc.?)

Object History Worksheet

What is the object made of?

Bone	Ceramic/Pottery	Fabric	Glass
Leather/Animal Skin	Metal	Paper	Plastic
Rubber	Stone	Wood	Other:

Can you be more specific about any of these materials? For example, maybe the object is made of deer bone or tin or limestone.

How big is the object? (About the size of a quarter? A shoebox? An oven?)

Is the object made up of any significant parts? Or is it a part of a larger object?

Context

When was the object made and used?

Where was the object made and used?

Who made the object?

What was this object used for? Who do you think used it?

Analysis

What 3 words describe this object?

Does any prior knowledge help you understand this object? How so?

Do people still use objects like this today? How are they similar or different?

What does this object say to you about the time when it was made and used?

Write a list of questions to help you learn more about this object and how it connects to broader themes in history.

Closed-Ended Questions	Open-Ended Questions
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Gather at least five different sources to help you answer your questions. List them here:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

After you've analyzed your sources and found some answers to your questions, think about what you learned about the object and its place in history. Ask yourself these questions to help think about the main point you want to make about your object.

- **What stands out most to you about the object? Why does it stand out to you?**

- **What does the object tell you about past people or places?**

- **Why do you think this object is historically important?**

Based on your answers to those questions, decide what you want to focus on for your object history. In other words, what do you want your reader to learn by reading it? This is your main idea. In a sentence or two, what's the main idea of your object history?

Complete the sentences below with important bits of information from your sources that help get to your main idea:

Red – describe the source. Are they a historian? The person who gave you the object? A museum's website?

Blue – name the source such as the author or organization's name

Black – the important piece of information for your story in your own words

·According to _____, _____

_____.

EX: According to National Museum for American History curator Deborah Warner, the first

toothbrushes were probably made in China sometime around 618-907 C.E.

: _____ believes that _____

_____.

Ex: **Historian Robert Fries** believes that waterways connecting abundant forests with regions

lacking building materials spurred the growth of the lumber industry in 19th century Wisconsin.

: _____ such as _____ report that _____

_____.

Ex: **Local residents** such as **Sarah Smith** report that the Ella's Deli carousel was a part of many childhood memories.

Related Story Worksheet

What are some possible questions or themes from the object history that you could elaborate in a related story?

1.

2.

3.

Do you have sources to help you address these questions or themes? Which do you have sources for?

Which of these questions or themes is most interesting to you? Why?

Based on what sources you have available and what you find interesting, which question/theme do you want to develop into a related story?

What sources will you use to help you answer your questions? List them here:

1.

2.

3.

In one or two sentences, how does this story relate to the object?

Who are the key characters (people, organizations, communities) in your story?

How does this story relate to other historical events?

How can you see the impact of the events of this story today?

Based on your answers to those questions, decide what you want to focus on for your related story. In other words, what do you want your reader to learn by reading it? This is your main idea. In a sentence or two, what's the main idea of your related story?