History Mystery
An Artifact Reading Lesson by Log Cabin Village

Objective: Students will use the artifact sheets from Log Cabin Village to think critically about the past. They will be able to use their skills of observation to analyze the artifacts to learn more about life in the 19th century.

Purpose: To have students gain an understanding and appreciation for 19th century life through an examination of the material culture of the period.

Material:
- History Mystery Teacher Artifact Guide
- History Mystery Lesson Plan
- History Mystery Artifact Detective Worksheet

Lesson:
Introduction
Explain to the students that we have objects from the past. Museums call these objects artifacts. By researching the uses of artifacts from the 19th century, we can learn more about what life was like for our ancestors. Give students time to come up with what we could learn from an artifact. (Examples include: learning about what our ancestors did in their spare time, what kinds of materials were readily available, or finding connections between things our ancestors used and things we still use today.)

Let students know that today they will have a chance to be historians by examining artifacts from the past. They will investigate their artifacts, taking notes like a detective historian to discover more about the lives of our 19th century ancestors.

Solve the Mystery-Practice Round
Demonstrate the process of analyzing an artifact source by filling out an Artifact Detective sheet together. Use the history mystery worksheet to guide the discussion of the artifact. Explain to students that sometimes historians don’t know what an object is just by looking at it. In these cases, historians will perform research to find answers about the use of an artifact. Ask students how you could research the history of an artifact. (Examples include: internet research, looking at primary sources like paintings or letters, or reading books about life in the past)
Solve the Mystery - Small Group Activity
Give students the history mystery worksheets. Have students examine the artifact photos to answer the questions on the worksheet. Some artifacts may be difficult for students to understand. Encourage students to use their critical thinking skills to research their artifact to find answers to their questions.

Discuss your Findings: Come back together to talk about what they discovered about their artifacts. Each student can present on their artifact and what they learned or you can lead a more informal discussion. Ask students to reflect on their research. Sample discussion questions include:
• What did you find most difficult about solving your history mystery? What was the easiest?
• What did you find surprising about your artifact?
• How does your artifact connect to how we live our lives today?
**A HISTORY MYSTERY**

**WHAT IS THE ARTIFACT:**

**DESCRIBE WHAT THE ARTIFACT LOOKS LIKE:**

**MATERIALS USED TO MAKE THIS OBJECT:**

**WHAT DOES THE ARTIFACT TELL US ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS?:**
A HISTORY MYSTERY

WHAT IS THE ARTIFACT:

DESCRIBE WHAT THE ARTIFACT LOOKS LIKE:

MATERIALS USED TO MAKE THIS OBJECT:

WHAT DOES THE ARTIFACT TELL US ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS?:

[Images of the artifact]
WHAT IS THE ARTIFACT:

DESCRIBE WHAT THE ARTIFACT LOOKS LIKE:

MATERIALS USED TO MAKE THIS OBJECT:

WHAT DOES THE ARTIFACT TELL US ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS?:
A HISTORY MYSTERY

Log Cabin Village
FORT WORTH · TEXAS

WHAT IS THE ARTIFACT:

DESCRIBE WHAT THE ARTIFACT LOOKS LIKE:

MATERIALS USED TO MAKE THIS OBJECT:

WHAT DOES THE ARTIFACT TELL US ABOUT OUR ANCESTORS?:


A HISTORY MYSTERY

What is the artifact:

Describe what the artifact looks like:

Materials used to make this object:

What does the artifact tell us about our ancestors?:

Log Cabin Village
Fort Worth · Texas
History Mystery-Teacher Artifact Guide

Artifact A: Stereoscope

What is it? A stereoscope is like a 19th century View-Master. The person using the stereoscope would put a card with two side by side identical images (called a stereograph) at the end of an adjustable wooden slide. By looking through the stereoscope, the images would appear to be 3D. To achieve this effect the stereoscope uses two prismatic lenses that trick the human eyes into seeing a single, three dimensional image instead of two separate images.

Sir Charles Wheatstone invented the first stereoscope in 1838. Over the years, other inventors streamlined his idea to create simpler and more affordable stereoscopes. The most popular stereoscope was invented by Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1862. Stereoscopes became popular with American middle class families. Scenes from around the world were transferred to stereographs for the enjoyment of families across the United States.

Materials: Wood, Card Mount

What does it tell us? The popularity of stereoscope gives us a great insight into the lives of our 19th century ancestors. For instance, in order to purchase the stereoscope and accompanying cards, a certain level of disposal income must have been available for a family. Industrialization after the Civil War helped to create a growing middle class that hadn’t really existed previously.

The scenes in the cards shows that our ancestors had an interest in what life was like in other parts of the world, even if traveling was still relatively limited. It’s easy to imagine stereographs would have been purchased as souvenirs while traveling, bought as gifts, or traded between stereoscope enthusiasts.
Artifact B: Butter Mold

What is it? This butter mold was used to shape churned butter into a simple rectangular shape for serving and storing. When our ancestors churned butter, it would have been a heap in a bowl. To make it more visually appealing or ancestors used butter molds. Churned butter was scooped into the mold then allowed to set. The butter maker then used the plunger handle to push the butter out of the mold and voila! A block of butter was ready to be served.

Butter molds have been used for centuries all over the world. Sometimes people carved designs into their molds to stamp the butter. Other molds took on elaborate shapes like birds or flowers to add elegance to an occasion.

Materials: Wood

What does it tell us? Our ancestors enjoyed beautiful things just like we do today! Sometimes when we think about the past we forget that our ancestors were a lot like us. By seeing things as simple as a butter mold, we can be reminded that while life may have been hard in the past, it was not as dry and boring as we sometimes think.
Artifact C: Molcajete and Temolote

**What is it?** A molcajete is the bowl and the temolote is the stone. These are traditional Mexican tools for grinding spices and grains. Europeans used similar tools for the same purpose (mortar and pestle). Our American Indian ancestors also used the same process using a metate and mano.

**Materials:** Stone

**What does it tell us?** Our ancestors came up with solutions to problems just as effectively as we do today. Using the materials they had on hand, our ancestors developed tools to help them with everyday tasks like food preparation.
Artifact D: Hand Carders

**What is it?** Hand carders were used to prepare wool and cotton for spinning. The cotton or wool is brushed between the teeth of the two carders to remove any dirt or cottonseeds that remain after washing the fibers. Carding also straightens and separates fibers, making them easier to spin into yarn.

**Materials:** Wood, Metal

**What does it tell us?** The hand carder shows us that our ancestors had a wide variety of tasks to accomplish to make things we take for granted, like clothes, blankets, and other cloths. If our ancestors lived in a place without easy access to a store or couldn’t afford to buy clothing, they would have to make their own fabrics to use for clothing. Carding was only a one step in a lengthy process of weaving cloth. After carding, our ancestors would need to spin the fibers into yarn and then weave that yarn together using some kind of loom to create the cloth needed to sew together a dress, shirt, or pants.
Artifact E: Game of Graces

What is it? The Game of Graces was popular among young ladies in the 19th century. It was an outdoor game where two players would each hold to slender wands and toss a beribboned wooden hoop back and forth. The goal was to catch the hoop with the tips of your wands before tossing it back to your opponent. While boys sometimes played the game, it was meant to help young girls develop “feminine grace.”

Materials: Wood, Ribbon

What does it tell us? Our ancestors played games just like we do today! Games were meant to help children practice skills they would need as adults. Just as Graces was meant to help girls become more physically graceful for social reasons, games like Cup and Ball and Stick and Ring helped boys develop hand-eye coordination necessary for hunting.