

## Guided Artifact Exploration

### Overview

This lesson is an introduction to the Canadian Museum of History's History Box. Students will apply historical thinking as they examine objects and determine what artifacts can tell us about Canada and the people who have lived here throughout different periods of history.

### Grade Levels

Grades 4 to 6, Primary Cycles 2 and 3 in Quebec

### Estimated Time

1 or 2 class periods

### Historical Thinking Concepts

- **Evaluating Evidence:** What can we tell about how people lived by examining the clues they left behind? What questions remain?
- **Historical Significance:** How do we decide which and whose stories to tell? What evidence do we use? What evidence do we leave out?
- **Historical Perspectives:** How can we better understand the people of the past? How do different people experience the same events?

### Curriculum Connections

Social studies, language, media arts

## Objectives

- Explore and identify the objects contained in the History Box
- Discover how objects can shape our understanding of Canada and the people who have lived here throughout its history
- Learn about different perspectives in understanding Canadian history

## Materials Required

- A selection of objects from the History Box (one object per group of students)
- Corresponding contextual images
- Corresponding artifact labels
- Art materials – crayons, coloured pencils, coloured markers
- Tools for measuring – ruler, tape measure, etc. (optional)
- Photocopies of worksheets 1 and 2
- Interactive whiteboard (optional)

## Handling the Objects

Most of the objects in the History Box are reproductions made recently, based on actual items from that time found in our collections. Other items have been made by Indigenous artists and other craftspeople specifically as teaching tools for this kit.

You and your students are free to touch and examine all the objects and try on the clothing.

Remember, however, that the objects, whether authentic artifacts or reproductions, are valuable and breakable. Please handle them with care.

During COVID, touching or sharing items may not be advised. Please review our Safe Handling Guidelines.

## Virtual Teaching Tips

If you're teaching in a virtual setting, look for this symbol  to find suggested adjustments to the lesson plan.

## Part A: Introduction

### **Objects from the past help us understand how people lived.**

Start with a discussion about artifacts. As a class, come up with a definition of “artifact” and talk about the role artifacts play in informing us about the past. Discuss how museums collect and use artifacts to tell stories about the people and events that have shaped Canada.

Not all objects become part of a museum’s collection. Generally, a museum will choose objects that:

- are unique, special or rare;
- represent a person or an event, or reveal information about them;
- are related to the museum’s purpose or the subject it focuses on.

## Part B: An Artifact of Mine

Ask students to think of an object that is important to them, for example, a favourite toy or book, a trophy that they won or a gift with sentimental value. Have students complete the worksheet to consider the questions a future historian might try to answer when examining that object.

Hand out copies of Worksheet 1 – An Artifact of Mine.

Option: Invite students to present their objects and discuss them as a class.



### **Virtual Teaching**

- Send a digital copy of Worksheet 1 – An Artifact of Mine to students and encourage them to present their objects to the rest of the class.

## Part C: Artifact Exploration

### What can we learn about Canadians and Canadian history by examining the objects left behind or copies of those objects?

Encourage your students to think like “history detectives” by asking questions, analyzing available sources and taking context into consideration.

Divide the class into groups of 2 to 4 students.

Distribute to each group:

- An object from the History Box
- The corresponding artifact label and backgrounder
- The corresponding contextual image(s)
- A copy of Worksheet 2 – Studying Historical Artifacts

Have students answer the questions within their groups.

Have students present their findings to the class.

### Virtual Teaching:

- If students cannot physically handle objects, direct them to [historymuseum.ca/teachers-zone/](https://historymuseum.ca/teachers-zone/) to see digitized objects.
- Send students digitized copies of Worksheet 2 – Studying Historical Artifacts.
- Using a breakout room function on your video call platform can assist group work.

## Suggestions for Assessment

Did the students demonstrate good observational skills? Did they make connections between their objects and ideas discussed in class? Did they contribute to group discussions and express their ideas clearly? Did they generate strong inquiry questions?

## Extension Activities

- Have students write a letter for a historian to read 75 years from now. What would the students say about their personal objects? What would the students want historians to know about their lives?
- Use new inquiry questions from the students’ artifact analysis to start a research project.

## Worksheets

1. An Artifact of Mine
2. Studying Historical Artifacts

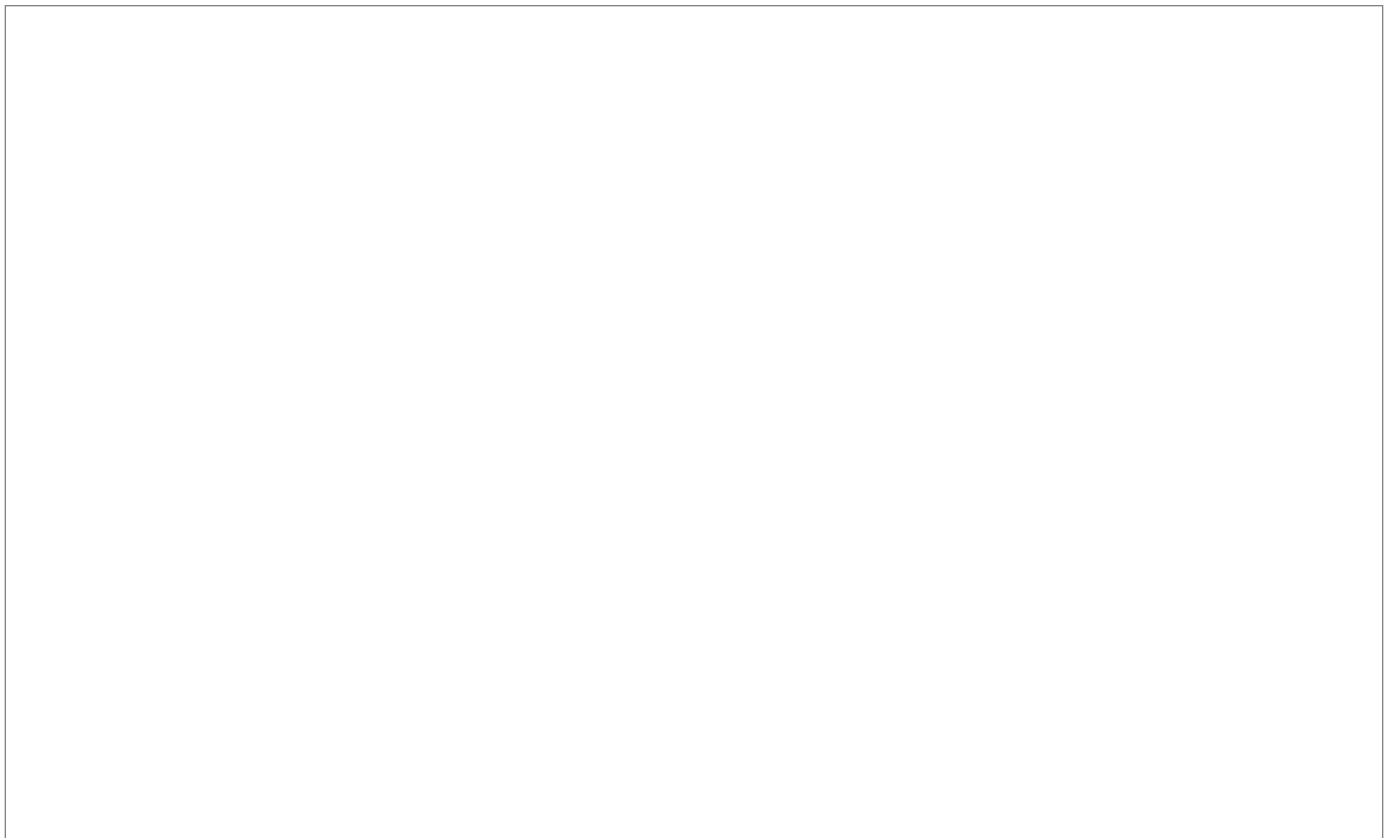
## An Artifact of Mine

Your name:

**Choose an object that is important to you.**

Object's name:

**Draw a picture of your object below.**



## An Artifact of Mine - Continued . . .

Think about your object as an artifact. Answer the questions below.

### **Describe your object.**

What is it made of?

What colour is it?

How big is it? (You can measure it or compare it to something else.)

What does it feel like? (For example, is it rough, smooth, bumpy?)

Are there symbols or writing on it?

How do you use it?

## An Artifact of Mine - Continued . . .

### **Tell the story of your object.**

How did you come to own it? (For example, was it a gift, did you buy it, did you make it?)

How long have you had it?

Why is the object important to you?

**In 75 years, if someone finds this object, what will they learn about you?**





## Studying Historical Artifacts

Students' names:

Object's name:

As a group, examine the object you've been given.  
Read the artifact label and the backgrounder then answer the questions below.

### **Describe the object.**

What is it made of?

What colour is it?

How big is it? (You can measure it or compare it to something else.)

## Studying Historical Artifacts - Continued . . .

What does it feel like? (For example, is it rough, smooth, bumpy?)  
If you can't touch it, describe how it looks.

Are there symbols or writing on it?

### **Identify where the object came from.**

Where was it made?

How was it made? (For example, in a factory, by hand?)

How long ago was it made?

### **Describe the purpose of the object.**

What was the object used for?

Who might have used it?

## Studying Historical Artifacts - Continued . . .

**Use the object to think about the past.**

What does this object tell us about Canadians or Canada at this time?

What new questions do you have about your object?

What new questions do you have about Canadians or Canadian history?

