

LIFE STORY OF AN ARTIFACT

Grade Level: 3 to 5

IN THIS LESSON

Artifacts are objects made and used by people that can inform students about the past. In this lesson, students will write and illustrate the “life story” of an artifact to encourage them to construct their own interpretations of and connections with history. *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* by Kate DiCamillo, written from the point of view of a precious china rabbit, can serve as inspiration.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop habits of historical inquiry by analyzing visual evidence
- To learn how to interpret visual information and improve visual literacy
- To develop writing and art skills
- To encourage creativity

ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.

FINE ARTS

Goal 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

SUGGESTED ARTIFACTS

EARLY CHICAGO/AMERICA KIT

Note: Replicas of these objects are commonly available.

Voyageur’s hat
Lady’s country cap
Bilbo catcher
Cloth doll
Biscuit tin
Flint
Maple syrup jug
Ice cream scoop

1933 CENTURY OF PROGRESS EXHIBITION KIT

Chicago’s 1933–34 World’s Fair in Vintage Postcards by Samantha Gleisten (features postcards of Century of Progress attractions such as the Sky Ride and Hall of Science; available for sale at the Chicago History Museum store or at <http://www.chicagotogo.org/chic19worfai.html>)

Century of Progress souvenirs, such as a spoon, tin bank, or button

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo
Artifact Life Story Outline worksheets (at end of lesson)
Pencils
Paper
Crayons/colored pencils

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ACTIVITY

1. Prior to the lesson, have students read *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* by Kate DiCamillo. This is an excellent mentor text for the artifact story students will be creating. Discuss the story as a class.
2. Explain to students that they will write and illustrate the life story of an artifact. Discuss the characteristics of first-person narrative and personification. Post your findings on chart paper for student to reference throughout the lesson.
3. Present the artifact kit to students. You might want to use some kind of fun container such as an old trunk or suitcase.
4. Have each student choose the artifact they find most interesting.
5. Distribute the Artifact Life Story Outline worksheets and model the process of completing it. This includes naming the object and imagining who owned it, when and where the object was born, what its purpose was, how it lived, and how it came to be part of the artifact kit. These notes will provide the foundation for students to write their stories. You might want to provide books and other research materials that students can draw on for background information.
6. After students have completed their worksheets, revisit the information from step 2 before having students write and illustrate their stories. Set a length and other guidelines as appropriate for the writing assignment.
7. Have students make their stories into mini-books. You might choose to have students use the jigsaw technique to create the books. Possible jobs are printers, illustrators, cover makers, and assemblers.
8. Have student read their stories aloud to the class and/or the entire school.

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EXTENSION ACTIVITY

The story “Hot Dog!” from the *Great Chicago Stories* website tells the tale of Alan, a child who investigates everything there is to know about the Chicago-style hot dog. Use the story and surrounding activities to build on what students have learned about historical inquiry in this lesson. (<http://www.greatchicagostories.com/culture/index.php>)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following books offer helpful background information about Chicago:

Chicago by Lynnette R. Brent

ABC History Mystery by the Chicago Historical Society

The Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, A Photographic Journey by Stanley Appelbaum

Fire in Boomtown CD, story and songs by Amy Lowe and Megan Wells

Journey Around Chicago From A to Z by Martha Day Zschock

Chicago History for Kids by Owen Hurd and Gary Johnson

Chicago (Cities of the World) by Conrad R. Stein

ARTIFACT LIFE STORY OUTLINE (page 1)

What is your artifact's name?

When and where was your artifact born?

Who do you think was the first owner of this artifact?

How did the owner use this artifact?

Turn to next page

ARTIFACT LIFE STORY OUTLINE (page 2)

Imagine and describe a dramatic or surprising event in the life of the artifact.

How do you think the artifact ended up here?

Do you think the artifact likes or dislikes being here? Why?

Now use these notes to write your story!