

Lesson Plan Five

OBJECTS IN TIME



RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 12



OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to accompany the Artifacts section of the *Black Americans in Congress* Web site <http://baic.house.gov/artifacts/>. Students have the opportunity to analyze artifacts associated with Black Americans who served in Congress. Students are encouraged to think about how artifacts can be used in the study of past events and people.



CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- U.S. history, American government, African-American studies, social studies, art
- Civil rights movement, women's rights, material culture



OBJECTIVES

1. Students will define, describe, and analyze artifacts.
2. Students will analyze the relationship between artifacts and the historical record.
3. Students will analyze the relationship between artifacts and the African Americans who served in Congress.



LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
 - a. What are artifacts?
 - b. Who makes them and why?
 - c. How can artifacts be utilized by historians to study past events and people?
2. Based on the class discussion, create a definition for the word artifact.
3. Divide the class into small groups. Each group will choose, or be assigned, three artifacts from the Artifacts section on the *Black Americans in Congress* Web site <http://baic.house.gov/artifacts/>, or the accompanying document <http://baic.house.gov/education/lesson-plans/artifacts.pdf>. Instruct students that only one of the three objects should be a campaign button.
4. Distribute the “Artifact Analysis” worksheet (located on page 3). Review the directions and ask students to complete the worksheet.
5. Have each group read the *Black Americans in Congress* profiles for the Members highlighted in the artifacts, <http://baic.house.gov/member-profiles/>. Distribute the “Congressional Snapshot” worksheet (located on page 4). Review the directions and ask students to complete the worksheet.
6. Have students choose **one** artifact and **one** of the options below to present their findings from the “Artifact Analysis” and “Congressional Snapshot” exercises to the class:
 - a. An exhibit for a museum or historical society featuring the artifact and the Member
 - b. A unique artifact designed by students to distribute to people for an event honoring the Member
 - c. An interactive timeline featuring the artifact and the Member
 - d. A two-page narrative with images for a history magazine entitled, “If This Artifact Could Talk...” which explains the relationship between the object and the Member
7. If time permits, conduct one of the optional extended activities.



SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Invite a curator to speak to your class about the historical value of artifacts.
2. Organize a history fair to display products created by students (timelines, exhibits, artifacts, and narratives).
3. Have students perform a series of skits which use artifacts to describe the careers of the highlighted Members of Congress.



ONLINE RESOURCES

Online Biographical Directory of the United States Congress

Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.

<http://bioguide.congress.gov>

Office of the Clerk, Art & History

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. House of Representatives such as weekly historical highlights, party divisions, congressional apportionment, leadership and officers, and significant events.

http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/index.html

Senate Historical Office

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.

http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm

Library of Congress/THOMAS

Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).

<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

GPO Access

Includes links for searchable databases of the *Congressional Record* and *House Journal* (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html>



ARTIFACT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

A box of artifacts has been found in the basement of the Capitol. Historians need assistance in identifying, describing, and explaining the significance of the objects. Analyze each of your three congressional artifacts and then answer the questions below.

Description (each object)

- What is the shape, size (educated guess), and color of the object?
- What person or idea is featured on the object?
- What is written on the object?
- What are some of the unique features of the object?

Purpose (each object)

- How was the object used? What was it made for?
- Is the purpose of the object the same today as when it was first made? Explain.
- Are there multiple functions/uses for the object? If so, please list.

Inference (each object)

- Why was the object created?
- When do you think the object was made? Is this the same time period that the object represents?
- What can the object tell us about the time period that it represents?
- How could historians use this object to learn more about the featured Member?
- How could historians use this object to learn more about politics?

Comparison (three objects)

- What are three similarities between the objects?
- What are three differences between the objects?
- Collectively, how can these three objects help historians better understand the past?



CONGRESSIONAL SNAPSHOT WORKSHEET

Choose one of the former Members highlighted in your artifacts. Then use his or her *Black Americans in Congress* profile and your completed artifact analysis worksheet to answer the questions below.

1. When and where was the Member born?
2. Describe the Member's educational background and employment before his or her congressional career.
3. When was the Member elected?
4. Did he or she serve in the House of Representatives, the Senate, or both?
5. When did he or she serve in Congress?
6. Which district and/or state did he or she represent?
7. On which committees did the Member serve?
8. List some of the issues he or she advocated during his or her congressional career.
9. What were some of the Member's significant legislative accomplishments in Congress?
10. List and analyze one quote from the profile. What does this quote tell us about his or her career in Congress?